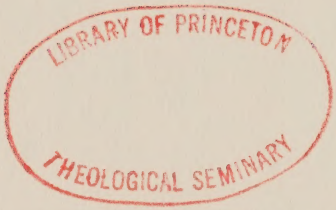

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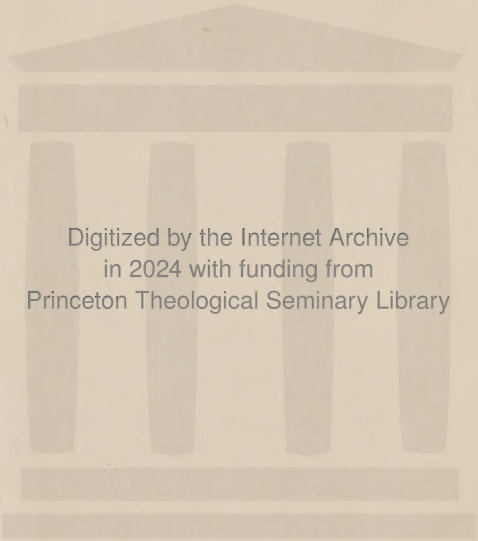

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REFLECTIONS

ON

THE SPIRIT,

&c. &c.

OF

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY:

WITH

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

DISCOURSES OF DOCTOR PORTEUS,

BISHOP OF LONDON;

DOCTOR WATSON,

BISHOP OF LANDAFF;

DOCTOR SHUTE BARRINGTON,

BISHOP OF DURHAM; AND

DOCTOR RENNELL,

OF LONDON.

BY THE REV. DR. FLETCHER,

OF HEXHAM, ENGLAND.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR BERNARD DORNIN,

Bookseller, 136, Pearl-street.

1808.

However, on reconsidering my *Introduction* likewise, I was induced to believe, that some farther observations extended beyond the limits of an ordinary preface, would be useful; not only as the medium for my apology, but to convey some desultory reflections, which I could not easily connect with the series of my controversial disquisitions. I, therefore, made additions to my *Introduction;* and, insensibly, my additions grew into a volume;—which, without any other approbation or revision than my own, (I say this, that if censured, the censure may attach merely to an individual,) I cast upon the public; anxious only, that if it be not fated to benefit the cause of religion, or to allay the force of prejudice, it may be so fortunate as neither to lessen the kindness of benevolence, nor to irritate the ill-will of partiality.

It was not, indeed, without a long combat with my apprehensions, that I could be induced to engage in the cause of controversy. I know the general disinclination to controversy. I know, that what we

now call *liberality*, frowns upon it. I have, besides, many private motives, which argued more powerfully against the undertaking. It is my lot to move within a small, though respectable, circle of acquaintance, who loudly censure every thing controversial. My Catholic friend condemns whatever is written against the Protestant, as the source of fresh disunion; and my Protestant neighbour, possibly for the same reason, reprobates whatever is written in defence of the Roman Catholic. Thus, as I love peace, (if I know myself,) as much as the most peaceful; and should equally with them, be unwilling to disturb it, the fear of public disapprobation, and the dread of private censure, had nearly awed my timidity to silence.

However, notwithstanding the impressions which these considerations made upon my mind, the conviction that controversy may be liberally conducted, and that the aversion to it when thus conducted, is the effect of misconception,—at length, prevailed over my apprehensions, and em-

boldened me to write. For why, said I, may not the great truths of religion, like almost every other subject, be treated with temperance and candour? Why should the most interesting of all subjects be the only one which it is illiberal to discuss?

There is, I allow it, a form of controversy, which, since the æra of the reformation, has always laboured to keep open the unhappy breach, which the immoderation of the first reformers had already rendered too wide. There is a form of controversy which is harsh, petulant, and mischievous; the nurse of prejudice, and the parent of animosity. That the moderation of the Catholic, or the liberality of the Protestant, should reprobate this kind of controversy, I do not wonder. I abhor it equally with them.

But it is a very mistaken notion to conceive, that controversy is essentially of this nature. A controversial work, when dictated by the love of truth; and written, as it should be, by the hand of charity, is directly the reverse. Its very object is to

conciliate. It comes to unite the divided; and to show that divisions are the effect of misunderstanding, interest, or passion. A controversial work comes to implore benevolence; to instruct ignorance; or to enlighten prejudice. It comes to persuade: and as all persuasion should be calm, moderate, and polite, it ought, necessarily, to be free from all the indelicacy of insult; the exacerbation of reproach, and all the mean artifices of insincerity. It is an injury to the mild religion of Jesus, to imagine that it needs the aid of passion; or the help of petulance and disingenuity. These are the useful subsidiaries to bad causes.—Religion should be defended in the spirit of religion; by the arms of truth, wielded by the hand of charity. Religion reprobates even the zeal that is not charitable: she desires no triumphs, but those which meekness can obtain. She does not permit the strayed sheep to be driven back to the fold, by the rudeness of compulsion; but to be carried there in the arms of pity and affection. The mischief of controver-

sy is not in controversy itself; but in the injurious mode of treating it; not in the nature of the subject; but in the intemperance of the man who discusses it.

The unqualified disapprobation of controversy is, therefore, the effect of prejudice. But, is there not something strikingly singular in the aversion which a multitude of Catholics entertain to the publication of Catholic books? For, when what even controversy says is true, and when truth is presented with calmness and moderation, (which is, almost invariably, the case with catholic controversy,) in such circumstances, to censure their publication; what is this, in reality, but to assert that the Protestant is either too bigoted to love the truth, or too illiberal to admit it? Such aversion evidently implies the supposition that he is afraid of contemplating the awful columns which support the venerable fabric of Catholicity; that he is offended with the voice of reason, or shrinks from the light of evidence. There is in this a pointed satire upon the *liberality*, or sincerity of the Protestant.

As for the aversion which nearly all Protestants entertain for the controversial works of Catholics, or the disapprobation with which they see them sometimes steal into public notice; there is an illiberality in both, which is repugnant to the rules of charity, and inconsistent with the love of truth. Let him who is averse to our publications, consult only the works which the press is daily teeming out against us. These are alone sufficient apologies for us, to the feelings of candour. These, to the feelings of candour, will seem to render our publications even necessary. In these, we are accused of teaching a religion, which is a "series of wicked corruptions, senseless idolatry, and stupid superstitions: a religion which sanctifies guilt, and exempts its followers from their moral obligations:" in these, we are held forth, "as the authors of infidelity; the abettors of persecution; the apostles of imposture." In short, whatever the virulence of malice, the pertness of ill-nature, or the flippancy of vapid declamation can assert; whatever the severi-

ty of bigotry, the stupidity of ignorance, or the injustice of prejudice can suggest; all this, even in the works and sermons of modern Protestants, is incessantly urged against us: and what is worse, all this is incessantly urged upon the unreasoning credulity of the public. To men thus situated, is not the aversion most illiberal, which would refuse them the poor privilege to vindicate their principles: and which censures them, if they modestly attempt to prove that their adversaries are mistaken?—An accusation imposes an obligation of defence, where the justification is possible. Justice allows it to *convict guilt*, in order to extenuate, as much as may be, the ignominy of its offence. Silence in those cases where a defence is urgent, is very properly construed into an acknowledgment of guilt. And if, therefore, it be not impossible for the Catholic to defend his principles, he owes that defence to the credit of his religion, and to the love of truth; he owes it to the respect which is due to his own character, and to

the justice and good will of his country. Indeed, equity should applaud our vindication;—should not only applaud, but recommend it to the notice of all who have heard or read our crimination; and who, from the boldness of our accusers, have perhaps, been induced to believe us guilty. However, be this as it may, the modest apology which we sometimes offer to the public candour, is the natural result of being accused; and all aversion to such apology, is the result of prejudice, bigotry, or passion.

Should it be said, that the aversion to Catholic publications, is not to the vindication of Catholic principles, but to the blows which these publications aim at Protestant principles; I must remark, that the vindication of any principles essentially implies the refutation of whatever principles are in contradiction to them. It is impossible to show, that our religion or principles are true, without proving that all opposite religions, or principles, are false. The demonstration of truth, is the refutation

of error. But, although we do attempt to point out the errors of the Protestant creed, provided we do it candidly, and with temperance, the mere attempt to discover *error*, should not in any case, or any where, offend piety and wisdom. Wisdom will always applaud its detection; and piety above all, in so interesting a concern as that of religion, should kiss the hand that points it out. The detection of error is, in every circumstance, laudable; and the man who sheds only one feeble ray upon one latent error, deserves the public gratitude. If, therefore, the Papist be able to point out one error in Protestantism, the candid Protestant should thank him: or, if he attempts to do it through charity, his candour should still thank him.

But, let me add, there is something not only peculiarly illiberal, in the aversion which the Protestants entertain for Catholic publications, there is also something strikingly, I had almost said ludicrously, inconsistent in it. It is a fact, which the

slightest observation may attest, that the works of Catholic writers, are hardly ever to be found in the possession of Protestants. The timid parent cautiously prevents them from falling into the hands of his children; the master, with equal vigilance, withholds them from his domestic; the parson, with a holy prudence, affrights his hearers, from the very temptation of peeping at their contents. To possess them is deemed dangerous; to read them is quite a crime. Even the immortal works of our Bossuets, and Hawardens, would be frightfully hideous in the study of a pious Protestant.—And yet these very same pious individuals will read without apprehension, all the dangerous productions of modern irreligion; and, with a gluttonous avidity, devour the impious works of a Voltaire, a Hume, or a D'Alembert; works, whose very object is to undermine the basis of Christianity; whose effect is to destroy public morals; and to wipe away private virtue. These works are not uncommon in the libraries of our most zeal-

ous Protestants. You may often see them profanely figuring on those shelves, where piety should have placed the works of the holy fathers: or where consistency would have ranged, with more propriety, the writings of Martin Luther, or the unchaste love songs of their apostle Beza. I have, indeed, sometimes heard the severity of Protestant virtue, or the gravity of Protestant wisdom, censure these productions; but even then, I *always* remarked, that they censured them with good nature; and reprobated them with a pity, which half bespoke approbation. Surely, there is a degree of bigotry in this conduct, which rests on the strongest prejudice.

The period is not long since past, when in this seat of liberty, the writings of Roman Catholics were strictly prohibited: and their controversial works forbidden, under the most rigid penalties, to be imported into the nation. A narrow system of persecuting policy, made it treason for a Catholic to speak the truth; and criminal for a Protestant to hear it. But, thank

God! those unhappy days are past. Justice and humanity are now seated on the throne; and its steps are covered with the liberal, the enlightened, and the wise. A system of policy has succeeded, which, as it is founded upon the basis of wisdom, neither forbids truth to speak, nor ignorance to hear. Satisfied that the Catholic is attached to the state by the ties of loyalty and religion, it neither considers our principles to be pernicious, nor our publications dangerous: it permits us to repel the shaft of calumny, and to vindicate our insulted maxims. We are even told, in a recent publication, from the pen of one of the most artful defenders of the cause of Protestantism; and one, too, of the most ungenerous adversaries to Popery, that "at present, not even a *professed defence* of Roman Catholic doctrines, could have any dangerous effect in this country."

I rejoice greatly at the growth of liberality among us. I rejoice to behold the silly fears which bigotry entertains of Popery, rapidly subsiding. I rejoice particularly,

at a declaration like that of Dr. Sturges*, that not even *the professed defence* of Popery has any thing in it, to alarm the timidity of Protestantism. These are the chief circumstances, which prompted my indolence to write.

I was, indeed, in the next place, also urged to write by the great importance of my subject. I wish much to arm the good sense of the Catholic, against some of the recent arguments of error; to increase the liberality, or diminish the intolerance of the Protestant; and to cast a ray of light, athwart the dark atmosphere of prejudice, which the ignorance and misconception of our adversaries have formed around them.

* Author of Reflections on Popery.

REFLECTIONS

ON

THE SPIRIT,

&c. &c.

OF

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

THE importance of religious controversy will, I am sure, be admitted by all those who admit the importance of salvation. Salvation is essentially connected with truth: and controversy is the medium through which truth must frequently be discovered. The religion of Christ Jesus is not like the speculative opinions of a Newton, or a Locke, in which error is not guilt; or the grossest mistake, no crime. The doctrines of Christianity were delivered to be believed, as much as its moral precepts were delivered to be put in practice. Both are essential to salvation.—To err, therefore, in faith, is not merely a misfortune, but an evil; not an unconsequential accident, but an offence, pregnant with everlasting punishment. "He that doth not believe, shall be condemned*."

There are, it is true, very different degrees, and va-

* Mark xvi. 16.

rious shades of criminality, in error. God forbid! that I should apply the same severe sentence, to all deviations from truth indiscriminately. There are errors which are involuntary; and some, I hope, which, through the difficulty or impossibility of attaining the means of rectifying them, may be deemed invincible. But, wherever religious error is neither involuntary, nor invincible; where it is the effect of indifference, or inattention; the result of passion or dissipation; in these cases the disorder of the understanding is sinful; as well as the disorder of the will. Both are crimes, because both are wilful.—Where even the ignorance of truth is not the result of wilful indifference, but the accident, or misfortune of birth; this, which is often pleaded as the great apology for remaining in it, is a meagre excuse, in the eye of reason and religion. For, if error be criminal, it is criminal wilfully to profess it: if the religion in which we are born be a wrong religion, it is evidently wrong to live in it. If Luther did wrong, and was guilty of heresy, by abandoning the church of Rome, his followers and descendants do equally wrong, and are equally guilty of heresy, by imitating him. Good sense cannot justify any one for believing falsehood, or professing error, whatever may have been their origin; whether the effect of inheritance, or the result of choice. The case is, the law and guide of the Christian is revelation; and revelation pure and unadulterated; pure, as it flowed from the bosom of the Divinity; unadulterated, as it was delivered by the apostles of our Institute. Where that is attainable, error is inexcusable. I might illustrate this, from the nature and from the obligation

of human laws themselves. Suppose a human law to have been properly sanctioned, and sufficiently promulgated; neither ignorance, nor error, are titles to impunity for its violation, even at the mild tribunals of earthly justice. Suppose a subject were to observe the civil law of a foreign nation, when he is commanded to obey his own: or suppose he were to follow the law of nature, when he should follow the law of his country; such a man, although the plea for his disobedience were the superior excellence of the laws which he had observed, over those which he had infringed, would not only be esteemed censurable; he would be punishable; and in many instances severely punished. The reason is, the subject is bound to obey the civil laws, which the state imposes on him, when it is not in opposition to the law of nature.—If God, therefore, has revealed a law for our observance and belief, why is not the refusal to observe and believe it a criminal disobedience to his will, and an act of rebellion against his authority?

Religous error, then, is criminal. And who will deny, that it is the misfortune of this country to be overrun with error? The multitude of its religions, has long made it the reproach and fable of foreign nations. Not many years ago, upwards of sixty different sects were enumerated, by the members of the Royal Society. The number has increased since that period. I speak of public modes of worship, organized to system, and venerated as divine. To attempt to enumerate, or describe the countless errors and extravagancies which are believed in private families, or exist in the breasts of indivi-

duals, would be impossible: they must be numberless in a nation, where the leading principle of the established religion permits each one to believe what he pleases, and to profess what he believes. We know too well, the infinite varieties of the human character, its prejudices, pride, and weakness, to imagine that the unity of truth could subsist under so wide a system of liberty, or amid so boundless a range, of what is called philosophic investigation.

Let it not, however, be thought that it is my wish to censure any thing that is consistent with liberty, properly understood; or with investigation, confined to its proper sphere. I owe to the former the privilege of speaking as I do.—But there is a liberty which becomes the man, or the philosopher; and a liberty which becomes the Christian, or the divine. In human things where an opinion is harmless to society, and inoffensive to the state, liberty is free to believe whatever fancy may suggest. In the sciences liberty may wander through all the uninvestigated mazes of truth or error. This frequently is useful; and liberality very properly applauds it. Yes; let even truth be sacrificed to the dreams of folly; provided this neither injure religion, the public, nor the individual; liberality, if it please, may applaud this also: in all these cases, liberty acts within its sphere; the man, or the philosopher, exert only the prerogative of their nature: and truth or error is almost immaterial. But in the divine system of revelation the case is different. Revelation is the law of truth dictated by divine wisdom, and enforced by divine authority; established as the fixed rule of our belief, and the unvarying guide of our religious conduct.

Revelation, when improperly understood, ceases to be revelation: or religion, ill interpreted, becomes irreligion. To say, therefore, that man is at liberty to believe what he pleases, when what he pleases to believe is not true, is to say, that man is at liberty to disbelieve revelation; that it is religious to profess irreligion, and lawful to adore the profane idol of the imagination, instead of the sacred dispensations of the God of truth. Liberty thus exercised, is not liberty, but licentiousness. And while, therefore, the liberty of the man and the philosopher, may be permitted to range the sphere of nature, without restraint; that of the Christian, and of the divine, in the holy system of revelation, is bound respectfully to receive the divine dictate; and, in humble simplicity, adore it.

Such is the nature of revelation, and such the necessity of believing it pure and unadulterate. I have therefore, often been astonished to behold the unhappy tranquillity, in which the great portion of the Christian world live easy, under the manifest illusions of deceit; and torpidly indifferent, in all the confidence of error. I have been astonished still more to behold it so frequent in my countrymen, who are blessed with the most happy dispositions for religion, and distinguished for their strength of reason and good sense. In the little circle of my acquaintance, curiosity has sometimes induced me to interrogate the feelings of a few of my honest neighbours upon these circumstances. Sometimes I have observed to them, that the possession of the truth must be infinitely interesting to a Christian. They, without hesitation, acknowledged it. I have observed to

them, that truth being divine, must essentially be one, uniform, and unchangeable; they acknowledged this also. I have then remarked to them, that notwithstanding its unity and unchangeable nature, they behold the country divided into countless sects; and truth made every where the plaything of interest, passion, and caprice. They allowed this too, and expressed their pity for human blindness, and their astonishment at human folly. Well then, I I have said to them, tell me by what mark are you assured that yourselves are not thus blind, or the victims to this general folly? How are you alone sure of possessing the exclusive privilege of the truth?—They paused—But though their reason could give me no answer, that should suffice to satisfy even stupidity; I always remarked, that they quitted me perfectly satisfied, that themselves only were in the right, and myself and others in the wrong. I have made on other occasions several similar observations. But it were useless to repeat them. The men to whom I made them, admitted that they were just, reasonable, and wise; applicable to every body but themselves; applicable to all their neighbours of different persuasions; and peculiarly applicable to myself as a Papist. Shall I call this, which is a very general case, bigotry, or ignorance, or prejudice, or passion? Call it a spiritual lethargy, or insensibility?

Surrounded as my artless neighbours are by neighbours of about a dozen religious persuasions, their good sense, if their prejudices would allow it to reason, would reason thus—each one would say: "I live in the midst of neighbours, whose belief is different from mine; who possess apparently as much

love of truth, as much ability, and as much learning as I do. Why, therefore, may not they be in the right, and myself in the wrong? I possess no privilege which my next neighbour does not: my reason is not more infallible than his: nor are the pains which I have taken to find out the truth, perhaps equal to his: why, therefore, should I prefer my opinion to his? Is not such preference the effect of rashness?" It certainly would be wise to pause at these considerations; and indeed it is certain, that on any other subject save that of religion, men would pause. In the opposition of opinions, where human interests or worldly prosperity are concerned, they anxiously compare and weigh well each specious argument; they consult the wisdom of the experienced, and the ingenuity of the learned. Good sense does not rest contented, till a minute investigation has presented a well founded motive of security.—Would it not seem that presumption is wisdom in religion, and folly in every other transaction!

The Catholic grounds his belief upon the basis of an authority, which he professes to be infallible; and, therefore, deaf to the suggestions of fancy or to the insinuations of private judgment, he reposes secure that he cannot be deceived. I shall not stop here to prove the necessity of this doctrine, nor point out its advantages. I am speaking only of the sources of security. Except the Catholic, all modern churches profess that their establishments and their pastors are fallible: and allow of course, very consistently, that their doctrines may be erroneous. The possibility of being deceived, is the public doctrine of every reformed church. I might say that

this possibility alone should be painful to a heart that loves security. I am sure it would be very painful to mine; because if insecurity be always painful, insecurity in religion, on which all my future, and much of my present happiness are bottomed, would be horrible. If secure of any thing, I should wish most to be secure in the invaluable possession of the truth.

But is not, moreover, the possibility of being deceived, which the Protestant admits, united also with the probability that he is deceived?—Whoever is but slenderly acquainted with the history of the formation of Protestant creeds; how they were often dictated by passion; composed by the hand of violence; modified by policy;—whoever knows all the changes and variations which they have undergone, cannot help fearing that such may be his misfortune: he cannot help feeling, (if he reason at all upon the subject,) that the motives for diffidence greatly outweigh the arguments for security. Variations in faith are always the result of preceding error; and variations, it will not be denied, have been countless in almsost every Protestant establishment. Bossuet, who had numbered a frightful multitude of them, declared that he was unable to enumerate them all. Burnet himself allows, that variations are the natural result of Protestant principles *. "We are neither infallible," says he, "nor inspired, nor do we aspire to either." To repose, therefore, rationally secure upon the authority of *any one* of the reformed creeds appears to me impossible. Whatever were the wis-

* Burnet Crit. on the Variations.

dom, the learning, or sanctity of the men who composed it, as they were neither infallible nor inspired; their wisdom, learning, and sanctity, form at best but a slender prejudice in its favour.

ANALYSIS OF PROTESTANT SECURITY.

THEIR FAITH, PRIVATE OPINION.

To come then to the analysis of the security of a Protestant; what is the last link in the chain of this analysis? or what the fundamental principle on which his faith is ultimately grounded? I speak of consistent Protestants; of men who are Protestants by Protestant principles; Protestants, not by birth, but by reason. The Protestant, who has formed his belief by Protestant principles, and who grounds it upon the foundation which the Apostles of the reformation laid; believes, because what he believes *himself* judges to be true: because *himself* has examined, discussed, compared, and proved it true. His faith reposes solely, and essentially upon his *own* reason, his *own* judgment, and his *own* authority. To let it repose on any other foundation, though it were upon all the authority of the Protestant churches united, would be a violation of Protestant principles; because these churches are not more infallible than himself, nor more inspired than any private individual. It is therefore, the weakness of human reason, the pride of private judgment; the partiality of self-love and self-conviction, that constitute the basis of Protestant faith and Protestant security. Lulled by these only,

he rests secure in easy confidence, spite of the protest of the whole Christian world against it, during the long lapse of above fifteen centuries; spite of the decided opposition of innumerable councils; of all the wisdom of the learned, and of all the piety of the virtuous, till the æra of the reformation.—Be the strength and privileges of reason what they may, there is a something in this opinion, an apparent presumption, which alone demonstrates its impropriety.

At an early period of the reformation, when the Catholics urged forcibly, the absurdity of constituting the presumption or the weakness of private judgment the sole arbiter of faith; the Protestants in order to obviate it, answered; that it was true indeed, that human weakness or private judgment might err; but in order to prevent this, the divine goodness poured a ray of inspiration upon the mind, which discovered the path of truth and pointed out the dictate of eternal wisdom. This system was perhaps the only one which could speciously or with any thing like the appearance of reason, seem to meet the objections of the Catholics. It was very zealously defended for some time; but unfortunately for the sect which first used it, it was soon employed by every new innovator, and every absurd enthusiast, to prove every kind of error. It evidently proved too much; and therefore nothing. Its ingenious authors very prudently dropped it. Consequently it is now true, that the consistent class of Protestants, possess no better proof of their belief, no other foundation of security, than the mere authority of their own private conviction, resulting from private judgment.

PROTESTANT SECURITY RASH.

I SMILE when I hear the Protestant deride the servile system of Popery; and exultingly boast that *his* belief is the liberal dictate of good sense; his conviction the evidence of reason conducted by the evidence of truth. Such confidence I must own, does frequently astonish me. And I am astonished much more, as I find it generally united with the most modest diffidence in every other branch of knowledge or human science. Curious to trace the origin of this confidence, and to discover by what happy art it is acquired, I have given myself some trouble to investigate its wisdom, consistency, and prudence. To do this properly, I have divested myself as I conceived, of all the prejudices and notions of a Catholic. I have supposed myself a Protestant, endeavouring by the rule of Protestantism to acquire the confidence and security which I have observed so general in them. But let it be remembered, I acted and reasoned as a *consistent* Protestant ought to act and reason, in selecting the divine system of his belief. As the object was interesting, I adopted all the methods which I thought the prudence of a Protestant could suggest in order to attain it. In the first instance I proceeded thus. I placed before me what was recommended to me, as the best and wisest system or creed of the Protestant reformation. I studied it with the industry of a divine, and analyzed it with the curiosity of a philosopher. I considered it in various points of view; in a variety of its different bearings, relations, proportions, excellencies, and de-

fects. I traced its authors, its origin, its history, its progress, and propagation. I found some circumstances that insinuated confidence, and many that created apprehension. I found some marks of truth and several marks of error. I found features in its authors, which did not well become the instruments of heaven, and methods in its propagation, which did not figure in the introduction of Christianity. I asked my heart if it could repose in calm security, in the belief and veneration of such a creed? I need not say, its timidity shrunk from the proposal—But as comparison and confrontation are rules of prudence; and particularly of Protestant prudence; I hoped to be able to obtain from them the security which hitherto I had sought in vain. Accordingly, supposing that I did not belong to any determined sect of Christianity; but that I had my belief to choose by the principles of the reformation; I called round me an immense multitude of sects and societies, who all pretend to the exclusive privilege of truth: I laid open before me their creeds, canons, and confessions. As all sects, even the most impious and absurd, with equal confidence and boldness, assert their claim to the sole possession of the genuine depositum of revelation; I ought perhaps to have consulted them all. But their number and apparent absurdity, made me omit this consistency. Passing over, therefore, the obsolete creeds of antiquity, which the unanimous voice of ages has condemned; and some of those which the piety of modern wisdom has strongly reprobated; I ranged before me the most generally approved of the countless confessions or codes of faith, which are the offspring of

the reformation—the tenets of Luther, and those of Calvin; the thirty-nine articles of this country; the opinions of Zuinglius, Muncer, Socinius, &c. &c.—from Martin Luther down to John Wesley. I learnt their tenets, and discussed them seriously; I studied their maxims, and compared them attentively. I endeavoured to find order amid this scene of confusion; to call truth from this chaos of error; and reason from this farrago of folly.—After a very long and patient investigation; confounded and confused; afflicted and desponding; I was compelled to conceive the thing impossible: and I concluded that to rest my conviction and security upon the evident superexcellence, or manifest divinity of any one of these creeds, would be rashness and presumption.

However, as the object was deeply important, neither my interest nor my curiosity suffered me to stop here. Determined if possible to attain truth; and with truth security, by the arts and principles which the wisdom of protestantism has suggested, I had now recourse to its best and most general rule, the Holy Scriptures; that divine, but much injured volume, which, replete with truth, is impiously quoted in defence of error. Well, I took the sacred Scriptures, and without suffering myself, as I thought, to be influenced by the ideas which my education, or example, or prejudice, might have impressed; I endeavoured by the strength of my own reason, and private judgment, to call from them the genuine tenets of revelation. I read, discussed, and reasoned on each truth. Sometimes I met a specious evidence that satisfied me: sometimes, an awful obscu-

rity that perplexed me. However, my reason was my guide; and I affixed to the obscure passages an interpretation which seemed most consistent with its dictates: I bent them to its measure. By degrees I formed for myself a complete code of faith, the creature of my own judgment, and the offspring of my own reason—Anxious now, and curious to discover how nearly my judgment and reason might have accorded with the judgment and reason of other men; and how exactly my system corresponded with theirs, I placed my creed by the side of theirs; and formed the comparison between them.—Behold! to my astonishment and confusion, I found that I had adopted some of the errors of Arius, Nestorius, Donatus, and of half the heresiarchs, who have insulted the pure religion of Jesus Christ: some of the impieties of Calvin; the dreams of the Anabaptists; and even the absurdities of George Fox the Quaker. My reason and my feelings, it is true, are different from the reason and feelings of other men; and, therefore, I found that my creed was different from every other: I found it a compound peculiar to myself; a system, such as none ever believed before me; and such, probably, as no other man in the universe would find reasonable but myself.—Yet, is this a system, formed by the rule of Protestantism; the genuine fruit of its boasted evangelical liberty. I studied it as I imagined without partiality; and formed it without prejudice: and, therefore, by the maxims of the reformation, it was wise, reasonable, and secure.—Why, though all the maxims, and all the authority, and all the wisdom of the reformation, told my credulity to be-

lieve it; yet the good sense of my reason told me, far more impressively, that to believe it was unwise, presumptuous, and rash.—Great God! I then exclaimed; am I formed to live the sport of error, and the victim of deceit! Placed in a path of darkness; is there no friendly hand to conduct me from it; no beam of light, to direct my wandering step? If my salvation depend upon my faith, and my faith upon the weakness of my reason, alas! I resign the fond hope of attaining either; and adore the dreadful severity of thy decrees.—But, behold! while lost in this perplexity, I recollected the rule which guides the Catholic; I acknowledged its necessity; and gratefully bowed submission to its wisdom.

PROTESTANT FAITH UNSTEADY.

HAVING thus investigated the light of truth, by the rules and principles of the reformation; it appears to me evident, that it is impossible for a thinking man to possess that strong stability of faith; that calm serenity of confidence, which the nature of religion, or the nature of human happiness, should seem to require. By these rules and principles, faith is founded, only upon the same grounds, as any other opinion. A man believes, because he *thinks* that such a belief is true. I allow indeed, that there are Protestants, who appear singularly steady in their faith; who would even resign life, rather than renounce it. But this is a circumstance which we may observe in numberless unhappy professors of every heresy, since the dawn of Christianity. There

is a steadiness, which is the result of prejudice and bigotry: a steadiness, which is frequently most obstinate in error, because it is the effect of choice and inclination: a steadiness which is the creature of indifference that is too indolent to reason.—But consult the Protestant who will reason candidly, and who has endeavoured to build his faith upon protestant principles; ask him, whether he be very fully satisfied of the divinity and security of his belief: whether he experience no doubts; entertain no apprehensions?—You will find, in general, that his faith is but a fluctuating system of philosophy; an opinion resting upon opinion; or a prejudice reposing upon prejudice. I am myself acquainted with some of this rational class of Protestants, whose life is an habitual state of doubt and indecision; a flux and reflux, between error and error: who are for ever believing and disbelieving; adopting tenets and rejecting them. The walks of life are crowded with men of this description. They might very justly be compared with children industriously collecting shells upon the sea shore; who gather some, yet soon tempted with the sight of others, throw the old ones away: they gather again; but again pleased with some new trifle, they consign what they had collected to the waves. Thus gathering and throwing away: for ever delighted, yet never satisfied; tired of the variety, and not knowing what to keep, they often end with keeping nothing, and return home empty handed and fatigued.

THE CATHOLIC RULE.

The Catholic rule of faith may be offensive to the pride of reason, and to the licentiousness of the imagination: but to reason itself, there appears a wisdom in it, which, while it preserves entire the holy depositum of religion, is wonderfully calculated to calm those apprehensions, which piety must entertain when abandoned to the guide of its own weakness and incapacity. The Protestant would do well to compare the wisdom of his own rule with ours; because it is upon the wisdom and divinity of the rule, that the security of faith is hinged. If the Catholic rule be the true one; that is, if the authority of the church, and not the authority of private judgment, be the guide and arbiter of faith, then the whole fabric of protestantism, which rests upon the basis of private judgment only, becomes a fabric of error; a house built upon sand; a church raised against a church. This is a question, in which salvation is deeply interested. But if the rule of protestantism should be the true one, that is, if what we call reason, and private judgment; which are, in reality, but prejudice in the prejudiced; folly in the ignorant; presumption in the conceited; and imagination, in all; if these be the interpreters of faith, is it not evident, that error is a harmless thing, because it is an inevitable thing; that error becomes reason, because it becomes the dictate of what is termed reason: that error is an object of adoration, because it is the object which private judgment venerates as revealed?

PROTESTANT LIBERALITY.

In the modern publications of our protestant divines, there is a glow of liberality, while they inculcate the privileges of reason, or prove the holy liberty of private judgment. I praise their consistency in this. I praise them too, when I hear them urge their followers to read the sacred scriptures; to study well the best defenders of protestantism; that there they may trace the divinity of their own establishment, and the silly absurdities of popish superstition. All this may be liberal. But, after all, it is not liberal enough. It is philosophical and consistent; but it is neither so philosophical, nor so consistent as it should be. Let them refer their followers to the sacred scriptures, or urge them to study well the best defenders of their own establishment, in order, if they can, to convince themselves of its divinity; not our bigotry will object to this. But when, to trace the silly errors of popery; or to compare the sublime wisdom of their tenets with the absurdity of ours, they refer their readers, as they always do, to protestant authors, there is a want of candour in this, to which both wisdom and consistency object. Where there is question of knowing the properties of any two objects, and forming a just comparison between them, their properties should be investigated in the mediums where they really exist; and the two terms placed, honestly, side by side of each other. It is thus comparisons are made; and thus only the understanding is enabled to avoid being misled. Now, as it is natural to conceive that the tenets of popery are *best*

laid down in popish authors; it is also *true* that they are contained *only* in popish authors. I do not know the modern protestant writer who represents them fairly. When, therefore, men urge the necessity of religious investigation, and comparison; if, when they bid their readers investigate the errors of popery, and compare them with the truths of protestantism, they refer them to protestant writers, they not only act inconsistently; but they advise what must, if believed, essentially mislead the judgment. Yet, is this the nature of protestant consistency, and protestant liberality. Who ever heard the Protestant recommend the investigation of Catholic principles, in Catholic authors, or from Catholic professors? Beware of Catholic books! is the general caution: which is the same thing as to say, beware of the only books in which the doctrines of Catholics are contained.—Beware of the artful arguments of Popish priests! that is, beware of the knowledge of those men, who, from their profession and education, are best enabled to inform you what popery really is.—Beware of the only means which can guide you to discriminate what is true, from what is fictitious; what is wise, from what is absurd. There is an illiberality in this, which sports with the rule of wisdom. For if the preference which the Protestant gives of his own tenets to ours, should be the result of conviction; and conviction be the result of evidence; and evidence the result of comparison; it is incontestable, that the method which Protestant writers inculcate to effect it, is inadequate and unwise.

To them, who have not traced the acts of illiberality, or the effects of prejudice, it would appear singular, that, in a nation where there prevails so great a spirit of investigation; where every Sunday produces a thousand angry invectives against popery; where popery is the incessant subject of conversation; where every fool is wise enough to demonstrate its impiety; to such men, it would doubtless appear singular, that nothing, in reality, is so little known, as the true tenets of popery; nothing so little studied, as the proofs by which its tenets are supported. The little knowledge which the Protestant possesses of our religion, is borrowed almost entirely, from the declamations of pulpit violence; and the misrepresentations of interested prejudice. There is hardly a Protestant, who has the moderation to investigate it; few, who judge of it with patience; or, in common conversation, speak of it with the temperance of common civility. I will not say, whether the reverend authors, whose learning so often teems out abuse against our tenets, understand them or not. I am willing, for their sakes, to believe that they do not; because I would rather suspect their understandings, than impeach their hearts. But, whoever knows our tenets, and consults their writings, will own that they neither expose them candidly, nor attempt to refute them liberally. When I speak of the works of our modern Protestants in general, I speak temperately, when I say, that they represent our principles unfairly, and ungenerously. In general, they exhibit them in all

the dark colourings of malevolence, or place them in all the ludicrous shapes of low buffoonery.

> A hideous figure of their foes they draw:
> Nor lines, nor looks, nor shades, nor colours true,
> And this grotesque design expose to public view,
> And yet the daubing pleases!
>
> DRYDEN.

The works which are written against popery, are nearly all of them the insipid declamations of angry, interested fanatics, attacking fanaticism, that exists no where but in the delirium of their own imaginations. Our remonstrances against this species of injustice, have always proved ineffectual. In vain do we call out, that these imputations are false; that these doctrines are not ours. These men call out louder than we do; and the case is, they are heard, and we are not. They speak too, to men who listen to them with satisfaction; and the consequence is, they are believed, and we are disregarded. Moliere's Medecin malgré lui, is not a bad representation of our treatment. The Protestant church abounds with men more cruel than Lucas and Valere, who, by insults, injuries, violence, and invective, make us idolaters, *malgré nous;* bigots, *malgré nous;* bad subjects, *malgré nous.*

CATHOLIC BOOKS.

To impute to us doctrines which we reprobate, and intrude them upon the public as our real tenets, is not only an injury done to us, but an act of injustice to the public. While it creates ill-will against our per-

sons, it sports with the weakness of public ignorance and credulity. I, therefore, caution the Protestant against the supposed doctrines of Popery, which he meets with in Protestant authors. Let him consult our doctrines in our own authors. Why seek the muddy stream, when he can drink with equal ease at the pure fountain's head? It ought surely to be supposed, that the Catholic knows his own religion; and that in proving his tenets, he will expose them faithfully. The Catholic gives this credit to the Protestant, when he exposes or explains his tenets. When we seek for the opinions of any sect, or society whatever, our good sense directs us always to look for them in their own writers; and to prefer their testimony, to the impassioned assertions of their enemies. It is singular, that the Catholic alone is denied the privilege of being believed. His denial of the falsehoods which malevolence attributes to him, is never half so much credited, as the malevolence which imputes them. Were we even to suppose it true, that the Catholic controversialist might deceive; there are, besides the works of controversialists, the writings, laws, canons, and customs, of eighteen centuries. Let the Protestant consult these. Not his prejudice can suppose, that all these can possibly deceive him. In short, this is certain; in whatever unadulterated medium, the doctrines of popery are examined, they will be found if not reasonable and divine, at least very different from those disgusting features in which they are exhibited, in the writings of Protestant divines.

CAUSE OF THE CENSURE OF PROTESTANT PREJUDICE.

If I have cautioned the Protestant to act consistently, I have done it not because I seek to induce him to quarrel with his own religion; but because, being inconsistent, he unjustly quarrels with mine. I have censured his prejudice, not because he neglects what I may consider his spiritual interest; but because, being prejudiced, he is also intolerant to me. Were his inconsistency or prejudice injurious only to himself, although not indeed indifferent to them, I should, however, have passed them over without notice. But whoever is acquainted with the history of the persecutions of Roman Catholics, if he has traced effects to their causes, must know, that half the prejudices and intolerance of the public had their origin in the ignorance of our principles. It is to ignorance, that we must attribute all the rancorous animosity which has for almost three centuries, in every corner of this Island, incessantly attacked our persons, and insulted our principles While a cruel policy suggested the horrid laws which persecuted us, it was ignorance that approved them; ignorance that enforced them; ignorance that exulted in their execution.—It was ignorance, urged on by the bigotry or wickedness of a few designing men, that in 1780, enkindled the torch of sedition; and had nearly reduced the greatness of this country, to the emptiness of a name. Malice, indeed, invented; but it is ignorance that vociferates the seditious yell, "No popery." It is it, that still principally inundates society with fabulous publications, and feeds that illiberality which applauds, most feelingly, what assails us most unjustly. If the ignorance of

the Protestant were a mere harmless thing, or hurtful only to himself; if he would only piously believe that "image worship is the established doctrine of the church of Rome;" that the Papist prays every day to his wooden God; or looks up to the canvass of his pictures, or the ivory of his crucifix for salvation; if his piety would only believe nonsense of this nature, and leave us unmolested, or uninsulted, although he might excite the smile of pity, yet he would hardly merit the reproach of wisdom. But the misfortune is, his ignorance is the source of injustice.

VIOLENT WRITERS TO BE AVOIDED.

If it be not possible to induce the Protestant to study our principles, in the only mediums in which they are faithfully represented; if protestant divines alone must be consulted, as the interpreters of Popish doctrines, at all events, I caution those who do consult them, against that class of divines who pretend to prove our errors, by the noise of declamation; or evince our wickedness by the boldness of their falsehoods. I caution them against the angry invectives of our angry adversaries, the Tillotsons, Burnets, Seckers, &c. &c. the heroes of former fame; and against the accusations of our modern enemies, the Rennells, Daubenys, Churtons, Towsons, and a long et cætera of names, which the evil supereminence of abuse, has lifted to an evil supereminence of credit. Let good sense reflect, that whatever is noisy, will stun the ear of reason: whatever is angry, will easily inspire anger, and mislead the judgment. All vio-

lence is passion, attempting to instil passion: and, where it prevails, as it will sometimes even over the moderate and the just, if ill-informed, it changes their moderation into harshness; and, placing objects in a wrong point of view, makes their justice unjust. What need, in effect, has truth of the help of passion? Truth is not like the thunder, that alarms; nor the lightning, that blasts. Placid as the genial ray, it sheds only a benign, enlivening influence around it. To unite passion with religion, is a greater destruction of the laws of harmony, than for the painter to exhibit the horrors of a storm, in the representation of a calm. Mildness is the art by which God designed that man should instruct or reform man. He never conferred upon the teachers of revelation, the authority either to injure the most ignorant, or to insult the most misled. So repugnant is either injury or insult to the genuine spirit of Christianity, that the man who employs either, while he violates the first rule of the religion which he affects to revere, which is charity, he injures also, in the eye of reason, the cause which he had undertaken to defend. As abuse is the worst of bad arguments, he proves either that he has no good ones to produce, or that he has no great dependence on them; either that he has no evidence to light up his cause, or that he believes his readers have not the acuteness to perceive it. At least, he proves this incontestably, either that his cause is bad, or that his own heart or understanding is bad. When passion has begun to relent, and there succeeds a reflux to moderation, all this will be admitted; and then, perhaps, the very abuse which has injured us, will be converted into a source of admiration of our principles.

ANCIENT PROTESTANT WRITERS.

I COULD wish here to be able to point out some among our modern protestant divines, whose works, from their temper and erudition, might be read with advantage, respecting the real doctrines of popery. I have not, indeed, read them all; and therefore, am not enabled to say that there are not some of this description. But among those whom I have read, and I have read many, I know none. (It must be observed, that I speak only of those who *profess to attack or refute our tenets.)* All are violent, abusive, and uncandid; although with some difference in the shades of their violence, abuse, and illiberality. There are, however, among the writers of a more ancient date, a few whose works might be read with more propriety. I recommend to the perusal of Protestants, the work of a protestant clergyman which I am told has lately been reprinted, *an Essay to Catholic Communion.* There is too a moderation, a degree of candour and erudition, in the writings of Pearson, Montague, Forbes, Thorndike, &c. &c. which distinguished them greatly from our modern publications. They may, perhaps, be read with profit. Although still allowance must be made for some prejudices: for prejudice will grow in the hearts of the most learned. In short, be truth sought for, where it may; let it be sought for consistently and candidly. Whether it be in the sources of protestantism, or among the defenders of popery, let the mind be open to conviction, and the ear shut to invective. Thus disposed, let the Protestant learn accurately, in the first place, what our

religion is: let him discuss its tenets calmly; and then compare them honestly with his own. Let him look back into antiquity; and, placing the religion of past ages by the side of his own, and the Catholic religion of this age, let him study well their resemblance, and compare their features. I will not anticipate the result of his comparison. I will, however, assert with confidence, that whoever is pleased thus to investigate the religion of Roman Catholics, although this investigation may discover some shades and abuses in it; yet it will discover, too, that these shades and abuses have been greatly darkened and misrepresented; and that they form no constituent parts of its integrity. The candor which knows how to discriminate, will separate these from the light; and will, I am sure, acknowledge that the passion and petulance of our enemies, have horribly disfigured the noble simplicity of our belief.

PIETY AND PRAYER THE BEST DISPOSITIONS TO ATTAIN THE TRUTH.

In pointing out the method by which our adversaries might correct their prejudices and inform their ignorance, I have not supposed them to adopt it, with the view of abandoning their own tenets, should they find them false; or of taking up ours should they find them true. There are so many painful circumstances attendant on such a change, so many awkward restraints to be put upon the corruption of nature; that, considering the disposition of the times, my presumption does not expect this.

I have rather laid down, as a philosopher, the art of correcting prejudice, than as a divine, the means of attaining truth. Did I, as a divine, suggest to my readers the means of attaining truth, with the view of inducing them to embrace it, I should not only tell them to reject those works which irritate passion, vilifying and misrepresenting our doctrines; not only to look for the principles of popery in popish authors; not only seriously to discuss and calmly compare the distinctive attributes of truth, as they stand forward in the catholic and protestant establishments; I should, besides, and more than all this, recommend a spirit of piety and humility; a serious attention to prayer and meditation. Religion is a system of piety and humility; and it is in holy communication with God, by prayer and meditation, that he speaks most plainly to the heart, and unfolds the truths and beauty of his law. The acuteness of human criticism must be attended by christian simplicity; and every feeling of human respect absorbed in the generous ardor for salvation: vice must be avoided, and the failings of the heart reformed. By these means the ray of truth would soon beam upon the soul; and that knowledge easily be attained, compared with which all other knowledge is but romance; all other science, folly.

But the Protestant not only errs, in borrowing his supposed knowledge of popery from wrong sources of information; he errs at least equally in his mode of reasoning, and in the conclusions which he deduces from it.

THE METHOD IN WHICH PROTESTANTS STUDY THE CATHOLIC RELIGION.

THERE are Protestants, I dare say, whom curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, has induced to investigate, in their way, the nature of Popish doctrines; and after a very serious discussion as they conceived, have very logically concluded, that the whole system is a compound of errors and impositions. I will present the method, in which this serious investigation is conducted. It is sure to begin at a point where, in reality, it should have ended: and, of course, the conclusion is wrong, because the premises were wrong. When curiosity, then, or the desire of knowledge has prompted a Protestant to investigate the nature of the Catholic religion, he begins the important inquiry, by calling to the tribunal of his reason, some of the great mysteries which we believe and venerate; it is some prominent feature in the sacred system; in general, the awful and insulted mystery of *transubstantiation.* Here, guided by the dictate of an unrestrained imagination, or even, if you please, by the dictate of human wisdom, he boldly attempts to measure its immeasurable abysses: he interrogates its nature, its properties, and relations; and he compares these with the nature, properties, and relations, of the objects which surround him. He judges *by the senses;* convinced like Dr. Porteus, or Archbishop Secker, that, "if we cannot be sure of what the senses tell us, we can be sure of nothing*."

Well; the sublime nature of the mystery places it,

* Brief Refutation of Popery.

transcendently, above the nature of human things; its properties and relations bear little analogy to human objects: its intrinsic qualities do not act upon the senses. Behold! therefore, with all the dignity of power, and all the severity of justice, he at once pronounces the mystery impossible, absurd, impious, idolatrous: and, by a consequence very well deduced from such an antecedent, the whole religion which believes it, false, foolish, wicked, and superstitious. This is the usual process of reasoning, by which the religion of Roman Catholics is proved erroneous, and condemned: this, the series of argumentation and deduction, by which the whole system of Popery is proved a chain of foolish and wicked impositions. We are reprobated, forsooth, and our doctrines are all absurdity, because the puny reason of a bad reasoner is unable to understand what the divine wisdom had ordained should exceed the capacity of reason.

PROTESTANT MODE OF REASONING NOT CONSISTENT WITH THEIR OWN PRINCIPLES.

In the above mode of reasoning, there is something specious, where men reject all mystery, and profess only to admit what their reason can comprehend. But, although it is no where the way which conducts to truth; it is, absolutely, inconsistent with the principles of men who profess to admit revelation. Whoever admits revelation, essentially admits mysteries, which he professes exceed the reach of human comprehension; which, he allows, it would be even impious to attempt to fathom, by the force of the strong-

est reason. The mysteries of revelation bear no proportion to the measure of the human intellect; nor is either their truth or falsehood evinced by the specious conclusions of common logical deduction. All mystery is above reason. And whoever, therefore, rejects the mysteries of popery, merely because his reason cannot penetrate them, must either be a disciple of the school of incredulity; or if consistent, should be one. The principle is deistical; and, if applied to whatever it extends to, it would not only explode Popery, it would do away Protestantism, and Christianity itself.

SURE METHOD TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH.

In the investigation of the truth or falsehood of the Catholic religion, a method should be adopted something similar to that which is pursued in the researches into all other branches of knowledge. The mind should proceed from the clear to the obscure; and from the known to the unknown. Each idea should be a consequence, regularly deduced; and hinged upon a principle, which wisdom had previously proved true. There should be no vague conjectures; no hazarded or self-formed suppositions, reposing upon self-sufficiency; which, while they are the dictate of folly, are revered by self-love as the offspring of wisdom. In short, there should be an arrangement and succession of evidences, which, though not perhaps essentially so orderly as the data to a mathematical demonstration, should still be orderly, regular, and consistent. As an excellent method for ascertaining

the truth of the Catholic religion, I recommend that which is employed in examining the certainty of revelation.—When conducted by the rules of wisdom and good sense, a man begins the important inquiry into the certainty of revelation, he does not, in the first place, call round him its dogmas, and immediately immerge his reason in the sacred cloud of mystery. If he did this, his inquiry would be useless; and his incredulity, perhaps, invincible.—Having deeply impressed his mind with the importance and necessity of revelation, he begins to ascertain its existence, by discussing the motives which render it credible; the prophecies, which have foretold it; the facts, which attest it; the miracles, which enforce it; the authors, witnesses, evidences, and the whole series of adjuncts, which confirm and recommend it. If reason be satisfied with these, of course, he acknowledges the Christian institute to be divine; and, therefore, believes whatever it enforces, although he be unable to fathom the abysses which it presents. The case is, it has pleased God to throw light enough around religion, to render it credible: he holds forth the torch of evidence to conduct us to its awful sanctuary. But having conducted us there, a new order of things succeed;—the blaze of human evidence is extinguished, and the power of the divine authority takes its place. Nature is silent, and God only speaks. Under these circumstances, man listens, and adores. He sees evidently, that he should believe; but he does not comprehend what he does believe. He hears God distinctly dictate mysteries, which he commands him to revere; but understands not the mysteries which he is commanded to revere. The docility of

human reason, in this situation, is neither pusillanimity nor weakness. God speaks; reason hears him, and his word suffices to satisfy it. It is even satisfied more perfectly than if it understood what forms the object of its belief: because what human littleness can understand, appears less awful, less worthy the divine greatness, than what human sagacity cannot penetrate.

It is in this manner, and upon these principles, that the Protestant should discuss the divinity of the Catholic religion. The same process of reasoning which establishes revelation, proves Catholicity. In both cases, there is a progress of reasoning which conducts to a final principle, where dissent is criminal; and incredulity becomes impiety. In the investigation of Catholicity, as in the examination of revelation, the mind is conducted by a pillar of light, through a succession of proofs, evidences, facts, miracles, and propositions, till it arrives at a barrier, where the pillar presents the dark side only, and reason is bid to stop. It is here faith begins to speak; and it becomes the part of reason to adore. God takes the place of reason, and his word becomes the rule of its belief.—Guided by these maxims, let the Protestant candidly examine the motives of credibility which attest the divinity of the religion of Roman Catholics. There are motives of credibility or distinctive marks of the true church, which every protestant admits, who admits the Nicene creed;—unity, holiness, universality, and apostolicity. Let him study these marks attentively, and apply them to our religion. (He would do well to apply them alternately to ours, and to his own.) Let him view the venerable age of our

establishment, reaching up to the æra of the apostles; its extent, reaching to every corner of the universe; its holiness, raising up saints and martyrs in every age. In short, viewing the long succession of facts, monuments, miracles, and authorities, which confirm its divinity; let him discuss these accurately and honestly, and while they compel him at least to revere it, they will conduct him to that last link in the chain of reasoning, beyond which reasoning is pride, and investigation an act of folly. The divinity of our religion, or of any religion that pretends to be revealed, should essentially be discussed by these principles. To reject any mystery, without examining first the authority which enforces it, is both unphilosophical, and absurd. The evidence of revealed truth, results solely from the evidence which the divine wisdom has shed around it. Reason has nothing to do with the mystery, but adore it. And thus, if reason would judge of Catholicity, as it does of Christianity, *by its evidences*, and not by its mysteries, it would find Catholicity as divine and rational as Christianity; it would acknowledge, it could not help acknowledging, that the very arguments which induce it to admit the latter, impel it forcibly to believe the former. Reader, try the experiment.

ABUSES IN THE CATHOLIC RELIGION.

But, in the investigation of the principles and practices of the Catholic religion, will not the eye discover abuses, which hurt the feelings of reason? Yes, it will; and it is here that the reason of the Protes-

tant, because not reasonable enough, either perhaps gives up the investigation; or at once pronounces the whole system of Popery a compound of bigotry and superstition. But these are the occasions when reason should recollect, that there are abuses every where; and that very frequently the very best things are the things which are most abused. Reason should here inquire, whether these abuses be sanctioned by our religion or authorised by our councils: whether they form any articles in our creeds, or any essential part of our constitution. Reason should ask, and investigate all this. And much we wish for investigations of this nature. If it can be found that there is one abuse which is sanctioned by the Catholic religion, and which *forms any part of its constitution*; for my own part, I not only do not censure the wisdom which condemns it; I applaud the good sense which rejects the whole system that approves it. But if reason will examine the abuses which subsist among us, it will find that they are all unauthorised and unsanctioned abuses; a few inferior practices, which form no part of the constitution of the church; and which the church censures and condemns. I defy the ingenuity of malevolence itself to prove the contrary. To desist, therefore, from the investigation of the Catholic religion; or rather, to reject it on account of a few unconsequential abuses, which are confined almost solely to its ignorant members, is not unlike that kind of folly which refuses to reap the field overspread with a golden harvest, merely because here and there is intermixed a thistle, or some pernicious herb, sown there perhaps by accident, or planted by

the hand of malice. In reality, we are so habituated to behold abuses blended with the best things and institutions, and united with the most useful laws and regulations, that unless they be gross and injurious indeed, they never form motives sufficient for their rejection; they never form motives sufficient for general censure and disapprobation.

ABUSES MAGNIFIED AND MISREPRESENTED.

It is, however, principally on account of the small abuses misrepresented by the illiberality of our enemies, and magnified to the grossest guilt and superstition, that Popery is so petulantly censured, and so precipitately condemned. Whoever credits the accounts which some writers and preachers have been pleased to give of them, must very naturally conceive that there is nothing in the annals of folly, so ridiculous; nothing in the history of superstition, so bigotted; nothing even on the rolls of vice, so horrible, so wicked, so extravagant.—Although in reality, they are mere specks, which wisdom would overlook, yet some of them, it is true, are of that nature, against which it is easy for men of little talents and malignant tempers to cavil, with an air of triumph. They form convenient topics for popular declamation; and, as the ignorant and superficial judge of most things by their abuses, it is a few unconsequential abuses frightfully disfigured by malevolence, that above every other cause, has sunk our religion to disesteem; and withholden from our persons the common charities of Christian benevolence.

I hardly blame the unreasoning credulity of the vulgar, for their errors. They have few sources of information, besides the invectives of declamation; and while their simplicity would esteem it criminal to suspect the veracity of the declaimer, their ignorance knows not how to distinguish the abuses from the law. Hence, the abuses of Popery are mistaken for Popery itself; and the unapproved practices of a few ignorant individuals, are construed into the monstrous superstition of the church.

SOURCES OF INSULT AND MISREPRESENTATION.

It is an object not undeserving the attention both of the philosopher, and the divine, to search the origin, and trace the progress of the rooted prejudice, and its consequent ill-will which subsist among the various sects of Protestantism, and rankle in the minds of its professors, against Popery and the Papist. While bigotry and ignorance are pleased to attribute them to the absurdity of our principles, and the wickedness of our conduct, liberality and wisdom will find their origin and continuance, in other more obvious causes. I will dwell, a few moments, upon this origin and continuance, after I have prefaced their history with a few reflections on the nature of truth, and the character of Christianity.

TRUTH ODIOUS.

Whoever has studied the annals of truth, or fol-

lowed from its introduction, any one moral or useful principle of science, is sure to have made the observation, that it was no sooner introduced, but it was contradicted and vilified. If the truth which was introduced were unpleasing to passion, it was attacked by the school of vice; if repugnant to general notions, it was assailed by the hosts of prejudice; if contrary to the inclinations of the vulgar, it was scouted by the herd of ignorance. Truth, above all religious truth, is essentially possessed of some of those characteristics; and therefore it has always been ushered into day amid the murmurs of disapprobation, and propagated amid the efforts of violence and contradiction. There is hardly any truth but what is of such nature, as either to be too pure for the corruption of some hearts, or too exalted for some understandings.—Where the former is the case, it is the interest of passion to vociferate against it: where the latter, it is the property of ignorance to reject it. Hence some one, I think it is Tertullian, says: "Plane olim, id semper est, veritas odio est." In regard of Christianity, therefore, it is very natural to imagine, that as its truths are opposed both to the passions and prejudices of the world, they would meet with contradiction and insult from it. Christ Jesus foretold that such should be their reception. Accordingly, whoever examines in what manner Christianity was introduced and grew, will find that it was amidst the resistance of power; the outcry of insult; the artifices of malice, and the injustices of misrepresentation. It was while it was diffusing truth and reforming the universe, that Paganism exclaimed most loudly, that its errors and superstitions were the

sources of all the misfortunes of the Roman empire. "The accusations of the whole world," says Tertullian, "impute all the disorders of the universe to the gospel; and the Christians are made answerable both for the dryness of the seasons, and the overflowings of the Tyber*." The pure religion of the saints and martyrs was exhibited as a monster of impiety, and a series of absurdities. Indeed, it is so natural for falsehood to vilify the truth; so essential to its interests to misrepresent it; that insults and misrepresentation become to wisdom the clues that lead to its discovery. They are the attendants that follow in its train.

I might here, (although I will not,) make the comparison, between the horrible imputations which Paganism and Protestantism have successively urged against Catholicity. Whoever pleases to make it, will discover that both have been nearly equally violent, illiberal, and uncandid. The Protestant calls the religion which we have inherited from the apostles, and the saints, a chain of corruptions, superstitions, imposture, and idolatry: a religion which traffics in impiety, and sanctions every crime. These holy attributes of our religion may be found in half the Protestant publications which make mention of Roman Catholics; they may be heard, every Sunday, in nearly half the pulpits of the nation. The reason is, falsehood, and passion, and prejudice, and ignorance, are in every age alike: alike illiberal, rancorous, bigoted, and unjust.

* Tert. de Resurrect. Carnis.

FIRST REFORMERS, THEIR VIOLENCE.

During the first struggles of the revolution which the reformation very naturally excited, it is only reasonable to look for violence and animosity. The introduction and growth of the reformation did not, in any respect, resemble the introduction and growth of christianity. Both were conducted on very opposite plans and by very opposite principles. While christianity was ushered in, and acquired influence by the arts of meekness, the reformation was begun, and increased by the arms of violence: while the former attracted proselytes by the gentle eloquence of truth; the latter excited followers by the more powerful vociferations of calumny and insult. The professed object of both, it is true, was the same, the reformation of error, and the establishment of virtue. But while the apostles of christianity reformed error, and established virtue, every amiable quality which could recommend or enforce either, shone conspicuous, both in their character and their conduct. Mild, modest, chaste, humble, patient, and beneficent, they earned the triumphs of truth, by the triumphs of holiness. They reformed the universe, by exhibiting in their own conduct the pattern of true perfection.—Far different from this was the conduct of the first reformers. Setting out, like the late infuriate Jacobins in France, with the subversion of law, decency, and order, their victories were sedition, plunder, and excess. Professing to correct vice, they spread disorder; affecting to recall truth, they gave birth to every form of falsehood. The

reformation, in effect, was the contest of party against power; or the effort of fanaticism labouring to pull down what its leaders were pleased to term superstition and idolatry. These leaders were men who would have figured in any revolution. They had the passions which opposition but inflames; and they possessed that rough kind of eloquence, which is calculated to awake enthusiasm, and impose on ignorance. Some of them, if we credit only the accounts which themselves have furnished of each other, were fanatics, in the mantle of religion; some of them hypocrites, under the veil of piety; some of them plunderers, under the mask of zeal; some of them monsters, without mask, mantle, or any veil whatever. From men of such characters, armed with such principles, it is only consistent to expect all those great excesses, which attend on great revolutions; the injurious artifices by which violence procures abettors, and the low expedients by which party ensures its victories. As for these latter circumstances, they were not merely consistent, but necessary; because, if it were necessary to destroy popery, it was necessary to prove it guilty; if necessary to plunder the church, it was necessary to demonstrate its idolatry; if necessary to abolish continence, fasts, penance, confessions, it was necessary to vilify, and arm the public animosity against them. This, Erasmus observes, the leaders did, most effectually, in their harangues and addresses to the populace. "In these harangues," says he, "they inflamed their fury to madness: they inspired such rage, that they seemed even possessed by the evil spirit *."

* Lib. 31. Ep. 47.

After the establishment of the reformation, it might have been expected, or hoped at least, that the violence which had formed it would abate; and those ignoble auxiliaries be dismissed which had contributed so powerfully to its successes. But such was not the case. The springs of too many passions had been put in motion to subside easily; and the impulse was too strong for the vibration to cease at once. Violence and illiberality still continued to support the reformation, which violence and illiberality had established. The fanaticism, ambition, interest, or jealousy, of its leading members, still thought it wise to retain those means for its preservation, which had assisted so nobly in its erection. These, therefore, with occasional pauses and abatements, have continued to be employed in every protestant government in Europe, until the late happy dawn of liberality and benevolence. It is only within the short interval of a few years, that the sword of persecution has been hung up in the temple of concord, and that the Roman Catholic can say, I do not tremble, to day, for my life, my property, or my freedom.

THE TOLERANT POLICY OF THIS COUNTRY.

In this country, the interests of the state became blended, it was thought, with the interests of the reformation: and the fanaticism of the legislature adopted, as a fundamental principle of policy, as horrible an error as any that disgraced the civil code of a

Dioclesian. It decreed the wisdom of persecution. Its enlightened liberality very piously sanctioned the frightful maxim, *that cruelty to Catholics*, "*would much advance the glory of God**:" and with a horrible, though proper consistency with such a maxim, its zeal legalized every expedient, enforced every method that could enable cruelty to attain so desirable an end. Consult our penal statutes against popery. It will be found, that the laws of half the persecutors and tyrants who have disgraced humanity, are less cruel and vexatious. They were, as Mr. Burke remarks, "a complete system, full of coherence and consistency; well digested and well contrived in all its parts; a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man†." In the pious work of persecuting Popery, the ecclesiastical establishment, whose distinguishing characteristic should be benevolence, concurred with the civil power: it sanctified the horrors of persecution, and rendered the hatred of Papists a source of distinguished merit. I might cite many examples of this illiberality; but I will produce only one, which is expressive of the general temper of the protestant clergy, during the course of above two hundred years. During the reign of James the first, when an alleviation was proposed of the punishments of Roman Catholics, the meek Archbishop of Canterbury, in his expostulation with that Prince, told him, "that such

* See Rushworth's Col. vol. 1.

† Letter to Sir. H. Langrishe.

a measure would call down upon him and his kingdom, God's heavy anger and indignation." In this age of liberality, it is not easy for moderation to conceive the extravagance of the sanctified violence, with which the zeal of Protestantism was wont to assail us; and effectually kept alive the animosity of the public. The pulpit re-echoed with abuse; and the press groaned with lies. Language had not words sufficiently harsh to reprobate us; nor the imagination images sufficiently horrible to represent our wickedness. That divine repository of maledictions, threats, and reproaches—the Apocalypse, was too scanty to furnish bigotry with epithets; or ill-will with expressions strong enough to urge prejudice to hate us. The chief ingredient of Protestant piety, and Protestant orthodoxy, during these ages, was enmity to Popery. Speaking of the time of Queen Elizabeth, Dr. Heylin says, "Not to speak of private opinions, nothing was more considered in them, than the zeal against Popery." And at a subsequent period, Bishop Bedel, mentioning the manner in which the Protestants usually treated us, he says, "They give loose to their pens and tongues; and what they say is only a series of calumnies and injurious language*." Even Burnet himself, to whose mildness and candour Popery owes so little, acknowledges, in his Life of the good Bishop, the truth of this observation. I will not crowd my page with quotations; but as the erudition, and, in an instance of this nature, the candor, of Bayle, render his testimony unexceptionable in regard of the writings of Protestants, I will just

* Sermons.

add that he asserts, that the controversy of our Protestant writers consists only in reproaching the Catholic with what he does not believe, and in animating their own party to insult them.

In malice it begun, by malice grows;
He (Luther) sow'd the serpent's teeth; an iron harvest rose.
DRYDEN, *speaking of the Reformation.*

When I reprobated our penal statutes, perhaps it would have been wise to have remarked, that they had not in general the poor apology for their enactment, that they were passed in the hour of danger; or enforced against subjects whose loyalty was precarious. In general they owed their enactment to the wantonness of cruelty, and to the industry of fanaticism; and were enforced against subjects of acknowledged loyalty; who had on every occasion, obeyed every call of their ungrateful monarchs; and assisted a protestant government to repel Catholic invaders. They were enacted and enforced against men whose only crime was that they believed what their reason conceived true; and revered what their conscience told them was divine. They were enacted against men for believing what they thought proper; by men who professed to believe what each one thinks proper, is the privilege of nature, reason, and religion. However, peace to all those whose narrow policy, or illiberal piety, thought it wise and meritorious to insult humanity; or to violate the principles of Protestantism for the good of the reformation! The days of persecution have passed away; and we forgive the persecutors. The discernment of modern policy, and the wisdom of modern piety, have at length discovered,

that it is reasonable and religious to be just to Roman Catholics, and that moderation may, possibly, create as good subjects as the sword of persecution. How much is humanity indebted to the man, whose bold and enlightened goodness first ventured to attempt the solution of the interesting problem! He merits the first tribute of Catholic gratitude. But to him; to the beneficence of the best of princes; to the enlarged wisdom of the legislature, every tribute is due which gratitude can offer. It is due also to several of that class of men, to the morose prejudices of whose predecessors the Roman Catholic owed so little. Several of the Protestant clergy have our warmest thanks. They felt the horrid impropriety of our bloody statutes; and nobly stood forward to urge their abolition. They acted, on that interesting occasion, as Christian pastors should do; they acted as Christian pastors; as Christian philosophers; and as Christian men. May their successors in the ministry resemble them! And may the Catholic, in ages yet to come, pay them the same tribute of gratitude which we do!

MODERN CONTROVERSIALISTS.

I HAVE acknowledged the introduction and growth of liberality in this nation. However, (perhaps, indeed, it should not be expected yet,) it is not so general as wisdom and humanity would require. There is still among us a portion of the community, and that not very inconsiderable, men of the old leaven; unhappy splenetic characters, who seem to regret our

little comforts, and industriously counteract the beneficence of the legislature. There are still men who are for ever unsheathing those murderous arms, which have wounded us so often; and, like their predecessors, whom Bishop Bedel describes so well, "give loose to their pens and tongues, and say what is only a series of calumnies and abusive language." That liberality which adorns every other branch of literature in this country, has stopped short in controversy with Roman Catholics; and, as if it were criminal to be polite to them, it is almost universally true, that the works which are written against them are harsh, peevish, and uncandid. Without any cause from popery to excite their anger, or any subject from the Papist to alarm their timidity, they still teem upon the former the brimful chalice of abuse; and they labour to keep awake against the latter, the spirit of suspicion and animosity; a spirit which is not only irreconcileable with the mildness of Christian benevolence, but repugnant to the lenient temper of true policy. Arrogating to themselves that infallibility in their arguments, for which they reproach the Catholic, they not only exult in the supposed evidence of their demonstrations; they triumph over us, more cruelly than the hero of romance over the puny victim which trembles at his fury. Popery, if you believe them, is still superstition trampling on the necks of deluded mortals; glutted with the blood of Protestant martyrs, and yet thirsting for more. It is the great harlot sitting upon the seven hills, and holding in her hand the cup overflowing with abominations. It is awkward now, indeed, to prove that the Pope is Antichrist; or, after so many false predic-

tions, to demonstrate with mathematical accuracy, like the Whistons, or the Newtons, the year or hour of his fall; however, our religion is Antichristian, and ourselves the disciples of Antichrist. Where even what we call moderation undertakes to describe Popery, with extreme forbearance, it gently calls our tenets superstition, and our practices idolatry.

INJUSTICE OF MODERN CONTROVERSY.

WHERE the principles of a considerable portion of society are impeached, and the impeachment involves perhaps their personal security; or weakens at least the sympathies of good-will, it doubtless should seem essential, that in so momentous a concern, each assertion should be substantiated; each argument well evinced. Falsehood and abuse are, in every case, improper; and where they injure the happiness of but *one* individual, they are criminal:—but when they sport with the interests of thousands,—I pause, to find a term by which such wantonness should be expressed. Yet is this the general nature of the works which the zeal of Protestantism has poured out against popery. Having first learnt what Popery is, consult them. You will find, for proofs, assertions; for arguments, reproaches; for reasons, ridicule; or often, where you find neither assertions, reproaches, nor ridicule, you will find, what perhaps is worse, the darkest insinuations, unsupported by the slenderest proof. I believe it true, that the Papist has not one generous antagonist, in this generous nation; not one who meets his Catholic opponent foot to foot; and

wields fairly the arms of controversy. I believe that the best apology for these writers is, that they know little about our principles. I doubt much whether many of them ever ventured to dip half an hour into a Catholic writer, in their lives. This I am sure of, it would be easy to refute the writings of half our protestant controversialists, respecting the doctrines of Popery, from the writings of the other half. What a fund of proof would the ancient Thorndykes, Pearsons, Montagues, Taylors, &c. afford, against the bold assertions of our modern antagonists!

To question the erudition or impeach the moderation of many of the antagonists of popery, may appear to betray ignorance or to manifest intemperance in me. The antagonists of Popery have been, and are yet, some of them, the first literary characters of this nation. Several of them are distinguished in the walks of life for the humanity of their dispositions, and the politeness of their manners. I allow the truth of all this; I join my feeble eulogy of admiration to the general peal of applause which honours them. I respect them for their erudition; and I love them for their virtues. However, such is the nature of the human mind, and such has before been the case with many exalted characters—great erudition is often united with great ignorance; and great humanity associated with great illiberality. In the characters to whom I allude, we find this exactly verified. With the knowledge of every other science, they manifest a puerile ignorance of Popery: and the candour which distinguishes them on every other subject is changed on this hateful topic, into morose illiberality, or petulant intolerance. As if there were something in Popery

too absurd to be investigated, or too wicked to be discussed with patience, they condemn it without any argument to evince its falsehood; and execrate it without any proof which the justice of moderation could deem reasonable. In almost every attack which they make on Popery, it is plain that satire holds the pen; and dips it—not where truth should, in the milk of benevolence; but where ill-will does—generally in the gall of rancour. If the Protestant controversialist, when he combats the errors or describes the abuses of Popery, piously wishes to reform either, or to induce the reason of the Papist to believe him; as moderation is the best weapon of religion, and candour the best arm of truth; he should usher in the contest with the gentle soothings of good nature; and triumph over our errors by the honest artifices of sincerity. Conceiving us wandering in the shades of ignorance, he should pity our misfortune; or lost in the mazes of superstition, he should present a friendly hand to lead us out. This would be to act generously; and to triumph over us nobly. This too is the spirit of religion; and the only means by which religion seeks to triumph. Should the Papist ever become Protestant through principle, these are the arts that would most powerfully prompt him to it. But it is here that Protestantism fails. Moderation is the great desideratum of Protestant controversy. It would render an attack upon Popery a phenomenon in modern Protestant literature. For my own part, whenever I read a modern controversialist, he is sure to bring to my mind the idea of an angry man, filled with indignation, sitting down to write an invective. As if convinced that a Papist was either too blind to

discern the beam of evidence, or too obstinate to embrace the truth, he neither studies to convince him by reason, nor conciliate him by kindness. His refutation of Popery is a violent declamation addressed to his own party, whom he convinces of our errors by misrepresenting us; and of our wickedness by insulting us. His proofs are his own assertions; his evidence the coarseness of his abuse.—Since in the Protestant church, there are multitudes who are distinguished for their liberality, and celebrated as learned theologians, and wise philosophers, it certainly is a circumstance very singular, as it is very unfortunate for us, that when there is question of Popery, neither their liberality condescends to gain our goodwill, nor their learning or wisdom stoops down to convince our reason. But, as Dryden remarks, and it is true—

> —*Zeal* peculiar privilege affords,
> Indulging latitude to deeds and words.—
> And 'tis their duty, all the learned think,
> T'espouse that cause, by which they eat and drink.

WARMTH NOT IMPROPER IF GENEROUS.

Let it not be supposed that I censure the controversial works of Protestants, because they are animated, either in the attack which they make on Popery, or in their defence of Protestantism. I censure them only because they are illiberal and uncandid. There is an animation which is both generous, honest, and commendable; which forms the great

charm of literature; and excites that attention to truth which its interests very properly demand; an animation, which is neither ill humour, nor petulance, nor passion. Let our adversaries possess only this kind of animation, and however it may injure or affect us, not even our prejudice or partiality shall complain. We should love and respect such enemies: and though we might regret to behold what was meant to adorn truth converted to ornament error; yet we should praise it, as the result of honesty and conviction.——I will, however, add, that while I do not censure animation in a writer, I recommend the greatest coolness to his readers. An animated writer, on the serious subject of religion, should be read with the calmest circumspection. The animation of a writer glows easily into passion in a reader. Passion warms to anger; and anger swells to injustice. Animation is the beginning of anger; and, consequently, perhaps of injustice. It is, therefore, only with the coolest circumspection, that men, above all of certain characters, can read with safety what animation has written with eloquence.

PROTESTANT WRITERS IN GENERAL.

It is the great misfortune of popery, as I have remarked before, that every ignorant writer is wise enough to demonstrate its absurdity; and every fool either sufficiently enlightened to behold the truth of such demonstrations, or credulous enough to believe them true. Hence, neither the abuse nor illiberality

which attack popery are confined to the learning of the polemic, but extend themselves through almost every branch of English literature; from the sublime theories of the philosopher, to the humble elements in which childhood is taught to lisp its alphabet. The abuse of popery is that happy incident which illumines the evidences of the historian, and gives energy to the eloquence of the rhetorician: it adorns essays, travels, geographies, poems, pamphlets, and romances: it gives wit to dulness; sense to nonsense; truth to lies; and what is its main advantage, (such is the public taste,) it ensures praise, credit, and, better far than either, to some—money, to the hero who employs it most profusely. I hardly know which, in this liberal and enlightened country, is most astonishing, the multitude of publications which drag the absurdities of popery into day; or the promiscuous variety of the subjects into which they are introduced. No matter what be the nature of the subject, there are authors, upon every subject, who, either to gratify the public prejudice or their own; or generally, as I hinted, for a more substantial reason, present the portrait of popery, or an etching of its profile; but, whether they present the portrait or the profile, they distort every feature so hideously, that whoever believes the representation true, both naturally and properly abhors popery and disesteems the Papist. Sometimes, indeed, it is neither a portrait nor a profile that these men present: it is only a feature;—popish superstition glutted with protestant victims, or sighing for fresh ones; bigotry adoring pictures; imposture vending the leave to commit sin; idolatry worshipping a bit of

bread. Whoever is conversant in books will allow the truth of all this; and whoever has traced the temper of the public in regard of popery to its causes, will own that the misrepresentations of our writers, added to their abuse and ridicule, have, after the misrepresentations, abuse, and ridicule of the pulpit, contributed more effectually to it than any other; perhaps, than all other causes put together. Notwithstanding even our oaths and protestations, the false imputations of these writers have formed the public creed respecting popery; and this creed, eloquently paraphrased with insult, has formed the public taste.

Discit enim citius, meminitque libentius illud,
Quod quis deridet, quam quod probat, et veneratur.

MORE POLITE WRITERS.

Within the circle of those who have been injurious to popery, or who have contributed to stay the feelings of friendship from us, it may appear singular that I should include some writers whose works are considered as peculiarly distinguished for their moderation; and are, certainly, distinguished for the latitude of their principles. However, such is the case: there are writers whose prominent feature is their enlarged principles of toleration, and who, by their praises of liberality, and the execration of all that looks like persecution, have contributed perhaps as much to rivet the public prejudices which subsist against us, and to keep back the tide of bene-

volence, as either the violent controversialist who misrepresents, or the preacher who insults us. It is well known, that there are arts in writing, as there are stratagems in war; that it is not always the assault of violence that so effectually attack an enemy, as the silent artifice of cunning. The sap, the mine, the hidden dagger, the sword, like that of Hermodius wreathed in myrtle, are frequently the most formidable and fatal instruments of destruction. It is with arts and instruments similar to these, that the authors to whom I allude, our Humes, Gibbons, Robertsons, &c. &c. &c. stab the reputation and aim the most deadly blows at the welfare of Catholicity. In the writings of these men we find all the affected arts of moderation; all the soft terms of warm benevolence; all the cant of the pretended school of modern philosophy, against intolerance and persecution. By these methods they conciliate attention, and prepare the mind to believe that whatever they assert is the effusion of sincerity. They arm reason against itself; or rather, they arm prejudice against reason. For, behold! spite of these professions, whenever they speak of Popery, it is to represent its superstitions; to paint its bigotry, to count up its abuses: it is to present the long list of the crimes of our Popes; the profligacy of our prelates; the impostures of our clergy. All this, indeed, if properly represented, might fairly be inserted in the rolls of history; but represented as it is, as the constitution of the Catholic religion; as parts of its creed, and the proper appendages to its practices;—it is the most injurious artifice which malice could have devised to calumniate us with effect. The consequence is, whoever reads

these works, if he were previously unacquainted with our true principles, be his benevolence what it may, always finds that his benevolence is soured into dislike; or his respect, if he had felt any, converted into cold indifference. I know that these effects are frequent; and that the authority of this class of writers has formed a stronger basis of ill-will in the minds of some very enlightened readers, than either the invectives of the pulpit, or the rage of the polemic.—In the name then of philosophy, which men now affect to venerate, if the religion of Roman Catholics must be attacked, let it be attacked openly; and rather let the storm of violence, with all its thunders, burst upon it, than the disingenuous artifices of cunning, concealed beneath the veil of candour, ingloriously undermine it!

OUR HISTORIANS IN GENERAL.

Had I to give the general character of our English historians, when they pretend to delineate the religion and conduct of Roman Catholics, I should not hesitate to say, that there is little more truth in their accounts than in the idle tales which fill up our romances. On this odious subject, their works are historical romances; but unfortunately mischievous ones, dictated by prejudice, or composed by interest to amuse the prejudices of the nation. Most of them were written by a party, to please a party; by declared enemies, to gratify declared enemies. At certain periods of our history to have spoken moderately of Popery, would have been dangerous to the author;

or would have damned his work to public execration. The public had not then the temper to listen to moderation; far less the taste to esteem what was said in favour of Papists, or with truth of Popery. Whoever, therefore, wrote at these periods, if he consulted his own advantage, the esteem of his cotemporaries, the reputation for wisdom, the hopes of preferment, the sale and circulation of his works, was reduced to the dishonourable necessity of becoming the echo of the public ill-will, and the vehicle of illiberal falsehood. Such were most of our ancient Antipapist historians: and, as the authority of our modern historians is founded upon theirs, (when an author does not please to fabricate for himself; or, as most of them do, cull from the fabrications of Hume,) the consequence is, that our modern histories are but the repetition of ancient calumnies, and the renewal of ancient declamation. It is, generally speaking, true that to look in our English historians for the real doctrines and real conduct of Roman Catholics, is like consulting the pagan writers about the genuine doctrines and conduct of the early Christians. There is about equal accuracy in both: and nearly equal wisdom in consulting either on these subjects. We want greatly a candid history of England.

FOREIGN CONTROVERSIALISTS.

Curiosity, or the desire of information, has lately prompted me to compare some of the controversial works of the foreign Protestants, with the controversial works of the Protestants of this country.—About

the period of the Reformation, I found all that I consulted nearly equally violent, coarse, uncandid, and illiberal. I easily excused that period, because it was a period of revolution. But as I proceeded in my research to subsequent periods, I found, (with a few exceptions,) that this country, with all its superior generosity, had produced more virulent polemics, more illiberal antagonists of Popery, than any other Protestant state in Europe. Bayle makes the same observation; and whoever will make the comparison, will be compelled to make the observation also. In the writings of some of the French defenders of Protestantism, there is an air of candour, a glow of generosity, a respect for truth. They meet their adversary fairly; and reason like men who speak from conviction, or seek for conviction. To judge of the German controversialists from the answers to them which I have sometimes read, although there is much animation, there is also much sincerity; although much bluntness, there is also much liberality: there are, indeed, errors and prejudices; but errors without calumnies; and prejudices without insults. Such too I am informed, is the general temper of the Dutch polemics. To readers who are not in the habit of tracing effects to their causes, the moderation of foreign Protestant writers, when compared with the English, may appear paradoxical. But the cause is obvious and natural. The bigoted animosity which had given birth to the horrid arts of religious litigation, began to subside much earlier in these countries than in ours. After they had secured the possession of all the wealth of the ancient church, and fortified their pow-

er so as to be able to defeat the attempts of the Catholic to pull it down, a general pause of forbearance succeeded; and the polemic no longer thought it necessary for the good of the reformation, to continue the low arts of invective and misrepresentation. These melted away to comparative benevolence and candour. It is in this country, and among our writers only, that these ignoble artifices have longest continued to subsist. As if the enmity to Popery were interwoven in the constitution of the English Protestant, or by education naturalized to habit, it is certainly true, that the most generous of all nations is the last that has shown its generosity to Roman Catholics; and the most enlightened of all writers, the latest who have resigned the custom of vilifying us. But I am very inaccurate if I appear to express that these writers have *yet* resigned that injurious custom. There are many who vilify us still; many who, as Dr. Thorndyke expresses it, and as he acknowledges the Protestant writers did in his time, still "lead the ignorant by the nose;" and industriously fan the dying embers of public ill-will. It is not many years ago that Mr. Gibbon made the observation, that "there actually subsists in Great-Britain a dark and diabolical fanaticism, perhaps beyond any other country in Europe*." Who can wonder at it, who knows the temper of our modern writers?

* Letter 127, to Mrs. Gibbon.

CATHOLIC CONTROVERSIALISTS.

Perhaps in speaking of controversial writers, it may seem proper that I should take some notice of our own; that is, of the Catholic controversialists who have defended the cause of Popery, or attacked the cause of Protestantism, in this country. They are not so numerous as might from circumstances have been expected; neither have I given myself the trouble to read many of them. I have, however, read several; and they were those whose reputation is most distinguished. I think that I am one of those who would censure illiberality any where; and hate insincerity in whatever case it were employed. I therefore read these authors with a mind open to conviction, and a disposition prepared to dislike whatever was harsh, peevish, and uncandid. This is, then, the opinion which I formed of them. They are nearly all uniformly alike—alike calm, moderate, charitable, candid, and sincere: or if indeed sometimes they are blunt, unpolished, pointed, and severe; they are blunt without harshness; unpolished without illiberality; pointed without malevolence; and severe without asperity. There is neither insult, nor calumny, nor ridicule in their writings. Whether they defend their own tenets, or attack those of their adversaries, their defence and attack are every where conducted and sustained by authorities, facts, councils, arguments, and proofs. They had not, they could not have had, any other motive to urge them to write, except the mere love of truth; neither in-

terest in persuading others, nor the desire of praise, place, or pension. The attempt only to persuade was treason; and to merit praise, by writing well, was inviting persecution. Hence, they wrote solely from conviction; and like men guided by conviction, and ambitious only of doing good, they assert only what they prove; and they prove what they assert, at the risk of their lives. Such men could not wish to deceive. I will say little of their abilities or learning. The abilities of some of them were of the most brilliant kind; and they were formed by habit to wield the sword of controversy, or to break a spear, with the most gigantic hero of the reformation. Their learning was such as great abilities, joined to the best education, should possess: it was extensive, solid, profound. Eminently versed in the languages of Rome and Athens, they learned all that antiquity has taught; and they drew their knowledge of religion from the purest sources of Christian authenticity. The works of the Holy Fathers of the church, were the constant objects of their study and meditation. If there be in their writings any fault which may seem to render them less estimable, it is the inelegance of their style. Elegance they do not possess. But then how could they? Reduced, if they wished for an education, to fly from their native country, and to seek it among foreigners, their own language was the only one which they could not cultivate; and which insensibly became almost foreign to their understandings. Had they written in the language of Cicero, their works, in point of style, would have ranked with those of an Erasmus, a Bembo, or a Sadolet.

Although I have thus taken upon me to speak to the character and temper of the Catholic controversialists whom I have read, yet as I have not read all, I do not presume to say the same of all. It is very possible, there may be some among them who are as harsh, violent, and abusive, as their adversaries. If so, as I do not stand the apologist for the smallest intemperance, I blame them greatly; and regret that so good a cause should be so very ill defended. However, though *my* moderation may censure them, would not philosophy, which accounts for the nature of human actions from the nature of the human mind, which imputes moral evils to the moral causes which produce them—would not philosophy, I do not say vindicate, but benignly excuse much of their intemperance? What was, or rather, what is still the situation of Popery, and the Papist? Both insulted, calumniated, loaded with every injurious imputation, which the malice of enmity can suggest. "Popery is identified with superstition, idolatry, imposture: the Papist, with the bigot, the blasphemer, the fool, the enemy to the state, &c. &c." Men are not all equally blessed with moderation. To be unmoved by injustice, or silent under the accusations of unmerited reproach, requires a temper which Providence has given to few. Let what may be the strength of the mind, or the power of religious principle; still there is another principle within us, which not only shrinks from insult, but rouses to repel it. The principle of resentment under evil treatment, extends from man through the whole animal creation, to the meanest insect.

Inest et formicæ bilis.

When, therefore, the Papist is treated as usually he has been, placed the last link on the chain of noxious beings, what wonder that the sentiments of honour should labour to repel the odious charge? What wonder, that the principle of nature should silence the better principles of wisdom; or patience itself awake to indignation? If a writer take the liberty to call the Papist an idolater, a bigot, and a fool; I think that moderation itself should not be astonished, if there were found a Papist who took the liberty to call such an adversary, an ass. The latter appellation is less horrid and less odious than the former: and such mode of defence is in the nature of the human constitution. At all events, it certainly does require violence not to be violent on such occasions. But after all, to what purpose have I said all this? Are there any Catholic writers who, following the instinct of their passions rather than of their religion, have re-echoed the abuse which their louder antagonists had vociferated against them?—I have consulted some of my more learned acquaintance on this subject; men deeply versed in controversial knowledge; and they have unanimously declared, that in the course of their reading, they had met with none. I believe that such accusation is not to be found even in Protestant writers.

ANCIENT LIBERALITY.

Since, then, I have asserted that there prevails a spirit of intemperance and insincerity among the antagonists of Popery in this country, which distin-

guishes them both from the controversial writers of foreign countries, and from their Catholic opponents, it may perhaps be deemed proper that I should produce some proofs to substantiate so serious an imputation. The principles and forms of justice essentially require that whoever ventures to condemn, should attempt to prove. Guided by this equitable maxim, it was long my intention to have accompanied the censures which I have passed upon the illiberality of my countrymen, by passages extracted from their works. I had commenced the ungrateful task, and compiled evidences which would have wounded the delicacy of moderation. But I found the quantum of abuse so great; the multitude of calumnies so countless; the instances of sanctified malice and malicious ignorance so frequent and disgusting, that although they would have evinced very strikingly the propriety of my censures; yet, as they would also have swelled my pages infinitely beyond the measure to which I had determined to confine them, I was induced to omit the interesting compilation. Indeed, when I reflected on the spirit of the times which have intervened between the reformation and the late dawn of liberality, I was also convinced, that the compilation was superfluous. It is easy, from the temper of those times, to conceive the temper of the writers. They were, in general, times when, as some writer observes, "little else was regarded but the abuse of Popery:" times when, to use the expressive words of an Archbishop of Canterbury, lenity to Catholics was considered "injurious to the glory of God." To expect temperance or truth at such periods, is not natural.

MODERN ILLIBERALITY.

To evince the propriety of the censure which I have passed on our *modern* adversaries, who, within the enlightened interval of the few late years, have assailed our principles with all the virulence of *antique* acrimony, is a task which it would require neither much study nor much difficulty to accomplish. It would require only the exposure of their own words. I am sure that few learned Protestants have read them without censure; no moderate protestant without indignation. However, instead of loading my pages with long extracts, or staining them with angry falsehoods, I content myself with a general appeal to the works of these writers. Let the reader, if he wish to trace the surviving spirit of anti-popish bigotry, prejudice, or malevolence, consult the writings of our Rennells, Churtons, Daubenys, Towsons, Wranghams, Williamsons, Sturgeses, Cambells, Zouches, &c. &c. In these, moderation will behold with regret, that the spirit of religious animosity and fanaticism is not extinct; and that I had as much reason to blame the immoderation of our modern, as I had of our ancient adversaries.

GREAT CHARACTERS.

If it must for ever be considered useful to the cause of protestantism to vilify the doctrines of Roman Catholics, it is a pity, both for our sakes and

for that of charity, that the dirty business is not totally consigned to the illiberal and little-minded. These, indeed, might injure us greatly; but it would be in the opinion only of the illiberal and little-minded, like themselves; whose good will although we covet, yet we covet it less than the good will of the liberal and the temperate. But the hostility to popery is not confined to the illiberal, or the little-minded. Besides the hosts of antagonists of this description, the cause of popery numbers among its adversaries some of the most amiable and enlightened characters of this nation; men who move in the first spheres in life, and adorn the spheres in which they move: who are the ornaments of their church, of society, and of literature. The hostility of such men is formidable; because of all the inducements which excite belief, the character of the man is what frequently gains most credit to his assertions.——But to me it is not the mere hostility of such men that alone appears striking; the harsh and peevish manner in which tempers so soft and gentle conduct their hostility, appears more striking still. It is a singularity for which it is not easy for wisdom to account. Whatever may be the cause of it, though this I believe varies with circumstances, the effect is almost uniformly similar. Whenever these mild, humane, and enlightened characters are induced or compelled to speak of the popish creed, we are almost sure to find that their mildness glows to anger; their humanity sours to severity; and their learning degenerates to prejudice.

To us, the consequence is serious. The lustre of their virtues exhibited in society, and displayed in

all the other branches of their writings, casting an air of probability on whatever they are pleased to assert, causes their falsehoods to be revered as truths, and their insults to be considered as the dictates of a holy indignation; causes the Catholic, of course, to stand forward the object of public ill-will, or the butt of public ridicule. If I take upon me to present a few specimens of the methods in which these distinguished characters assail us, it cannot appear either disrespectful or illiberal in me. Their works are before the public; and it is principally because I esteem their general liberality and respect their virtues, that I shall presume to do it. I mean not to attempt the refutation of their assertions; nor do I flatter myself that I shall diminish the indecorum of future intemperance; yet I think I shall demonstrate, (which is what I have principally undertaken to prove,) that Protestant moderation might be more moderate; Protestant liberality more liberal; Protestant learning more enlightened, than it is.

DOCTOR PORTEUS, BISHOP OF LONDON.

The following passages are extracted from a little work, which one of the most justly distinguished of our prelates composed, or compiled, or edited, some years ago, as an antidote to Popery.

I do not, however, present all or half the passages to which moderation might object, in the series of the work. I present only a few; but a few which express and resemble the general tenour and temper of the *antidote*.

" Some (Papists) had the wickedness to support transubstantiation, as an artifice that increased the authority of the priests." Page 38.

" A direct adoration of the elements of the eucharist was never paid, till the dark and superstitious ages introduced *so senseless an idolatry*." P. 39.

" They, (the Papists,) dare not say, that indulgences deliver the departed from hell; but they do every thing they can to make the ignorant think it." P. 53.

" If any one does ask for leave, (to read the scripture in his own language,) it is never granted where they dare refuse it." P. 66.

" In those countries where they are obliged to indulge it most freely, as in our own, it is but during pleasure; and may at any time be taken away, when it will serve the turn better; *nor dare the poor deluded people, under pain of damnation*, help themselves." P. 66.—Brief Confutation of the Errors of the Church of Rome.

I am one of those who can applaud the merits of my greatest enemy; and where the grossest imputation is only the result of ignorance or inadvertence, I can cordially and easily excuse it.

Non ego paucis
Offendor maculis.

The merits of Dr. Porteus have been frequently the subject of my praise; and some of his writings, although indeed they be neither very eloquent nor very polished, have been always the objects of my esteem. I believe that both his merits and his writings have been useful to society; and have aided to

stay the progress of immorality. I certainly do respect both the man and the writer.—However splendid as are his virtues, and useful as is the general tendency of his moral writings, yet he has not concealed from the public eye the humiliating testimony, that the greatest minds have their prejudices; and the greatest learning is subject to mistakes. Not his piety, which is usually so kind, is kind, when he speaks of Popery; not his humanity liberal; not his love of truth impartial. Evidently viewing our religion through the medium of an eye that is obscured by prejudice, and with a mind cankered by dislike, he diffuses through the pages which speak on the odious subject, the dark colouring of the eye, and the acrid temper of the mind. He is, when Popery is his theme, ill-naturedly illiberal; and disingenuously inaccurate. Whether on these occasions he hurl his own Achillean spear; or, ingloriously hid behind the Medusan shield of Secker, point only that of the patron, he almost uniformly dips the dread dart in poison, and aims it with unfair and unfeeling animosity.

I regret the temper of some of Doctor Porteus's publications, on account of the respect which I entertain for the man. I think them hurtful to his future fame. Should ever the long reign of intolerance be succeeded by an æra of genuine liberality, when nothing will be esteemed but what is recommended by moderation, it is more than probable they will be set aside among the neglected monuments of ancient prejudice; and their merits be forgotten, from the demerits of their intemperance. Some of his discourses have certainly a claim to the gratitude of posterity; and were all his writings equally mild with

these, both the writings and their author might have descended to generations yet to come, without the imputation of a failing, or the suspicion of a prejudice. As it is, although even the writings may be long esteemed; although it may be long remembered that their author was wont to preach assiduously; that he promoted piety; that he was learned, wise, and accomplished; yet it will be remembered too, that he had sometimes the harshness of the illiberal, and the partialities of the intolerant. The *Brief Confutation* of Popery will for ever be a monument to attest, that the same pen which could plead for benevolence, could also invoke resentment; that the same erudition which could communicate so many truths, could also scatter many inaccuracies among them.

But it is principally upon our own account, that I regret the temper of Doctor Porteus's controversial publications. Whatever comes from the pen of a great character is an awful, imposing thing. A great character above all, if surrounded by every circumstance which should recommend it to veneration, is an oracle to whose dictate simplicity listens in silent credulity; and ignorance bows down in stupid acquiescence. To the simple and the ignorant, the authority of a great name is every thing. It is more powerful far than his reasons: it has the magic to change falsehood into truth, and nonsense into wisdom. When, therefore, a man so deservedly great as Doctor Porteus, seriously asserts, that the Popish clergy wickedly supported transubstantiation to prop their own authority; that our veneration of the holy Eucharist is senseless idolatry; that our priesthood do all they can to impose on the poor deluded people,

&c. how can the illiterate, gaping, uninquiring, unsuspecting herd of his admiring readers or hearers, presume to call in question his veracity; or imagine that the venerable gravity of a bishop, in the sacred function of instructing them, could possibly intrude mistakes on their simplicity? The very idea seems criminal.

If thus the great sources of information from which the ignorant and the simple must derive their slender notions of the religion of Roman Catholics, be imbittered by passion, and intermixed with errors, what wonder is there, that the mass of general prejudice and misconception should be great in its regard? The vulgar, besides their disinclination to reform their prejudices, and the inattention to correct their errors, have few means of correcting either. They read little, and they reason less. Their general practice is to believe what they hear; at least, to believe what they hear from apparently good authority; and what is consonant to their own early prejudices. It is an easy thing to ingraft false notions upon ignorance. Falsehood, enforced by eloquence, and inculcated by passion or artifice, is just as easily made part of its creed, as the most sacred truths. These then are the causes to which wisdom may trace the strong aversion which subsists in this country to the principles and professors of Popery; the singular and absurd notions which the public entertain of our practices; and the very charitable opinion that we are idolaters, impostors, &c. Surely it is time to lay aside these ungenerous arts of refuting Popery; or these disingenuous methods of maintaining the cause of Protestantism.

It is not that I blame any man either for attempting to refute Popery, or for defending the cause of Protestantism. If conducted with proper temper, such attack or defence might be useful: and where either were the sober result of rational conviction, we should respect the man who used them. If our antagonists would remember that the first rule in every kind of discussion is, to be *just* and *accurate;* and in religious discussion, to be *just*, *accurate*, *kind*, and *charitable;* then, whatever to us might be the consequences of their industry, whether to triumph over us or not; whether to convict us of error or to prove us guilty of idolatry; so far from blaming, we should applaud their wisdom. An attack or a defence upon these principles would be noble. And in effect, it is an error to imagine that the defence of religion should ask for any other.—It is always wrong to misrepresent; always wrong to unite passion with religion. Misrepresentation and passion are auxiliaries which religion disdains: even to the instinct of good sense, they are calculated to sink the credit not only of the cause which they defend, but of piety and truth itself. If, therefore, the religion of Protestants be true, and that of Catholics false, let the truth and falsehood be pointed out calmly, charitably, candidly. Nothing is more compatible with truth than liberality. United, they possess an irresistible influence over the mind that is controlled by reason: for while truth strikes the understanding, liberality gains the heart. Indeed, if what Dr. Porteus asserts be true, liberality should be singularly conspicuous in the writings, and in all the conduct of Protestants. Protestants, he assures us, "by the heavenly influence of the scriptures upon

their souls, possess hearts that melt within them into tenderness, compassion, and love, for every human being, of whatever denomination, party, sect, or persuasion*." Should it not appear wonderful to behold any thing like illiberality in Protestants? But should it not appear surpassing wonderful, that the author of so beautiful a sentence; one who has read the scriptures so well, and so often, should himself be sometimes illiberal also?

I have before made the observation, that the object of these pages is not to discuss the controverted articles of religion, nor to answer the accusations which prejudice and falsehood have urged against ours. I shall do that in my subsequent publication. But I will pause a moment, to show how easy it would be to answer the unfounded assertions which I have extracted from the *Brief Confutation*. To refute these assertions it is not necessary to have recourse to the works of the holy Fathers, nor to the subtilties of our own polemic writers. The assertions respecting the period which introduced the adoration of the Eucharist, and the "senseless idolatry" of Papists, are easily refuted from the authority of Protestant divines; while the bold mistake respecting our treatment of the "poor deluded people," may be with still more ease, refuted by consulting the most ignorant Catholic in our community. The adoration of the Eucharist, Mr. Thorndyke tells us, was "the practice of the *ancient and true church*, before receiving†." And "I," says bishop Andrews, "with St. Ambrose, adore the flesh of Christ in the mysteries‡."

* Sermon on Christianity vindicated from cruelty

† Thorndyke, Epil. L. 3. c. 30. ‡ Andrews to Bel. ch. 8

Bishop Forbes, indeed, not only asserts that "the external adoration of Christ in the eucharist is the practice of *sounder Protestants*;" he adds, "to deny such adoration is a *monstrous error* of rigid Protestants*." In the same manner it were easy to prove, from the authority of several great Protestant prelates and divines, that the imputation of idolatry to Roman Catholics, is the effect of misconception, or more generally the result of ill will. Dr. Taylor undertakes to place the error of such imputation in *the evidence* of a demonstration†.—As for the bold mistake that we do not, even in this country, permit the poor deluded people to read the English scriptures, under pain of damnation; this is an object of practice, and therefore, it is easy to ascertain it. The truth is, that the English scriptures are in the hands of every Catholic who pleases to procure them; we often urge the poor deluded people to read them; we often distribute them *gratis* to the indigent, who are unable to purchase them. When men speak of *facts*, at least, it would be wise if, before they undertook to assert, they would give themselves the trouble to inquire.—This then is what I would wish all Protestants to do, after reading the works of Protestants against Popery. Let them compare what they have read with our genuine tenets, as they are laid down in Catholic writers; consult the well informed of our communion; or even sometimes appeal to the more learned and candid among the writers of their own persuasion. All this should appear a duty which the interest of salvation owes to the love of truth: and had every Protest-

* See Forbes de Euch. L. 2.

† Taylor, Liberty of Prot. sect. 20.

ant the courage to do it, or only the wisdom sometimes to doubt of what he reads or hears against us, what a spring of benevolence would be opened to the Papist; and what a source of ill will and prejudice shut up to the Protestant!

With these observations, occasioned indeed by the publications of Doctor Porteus, yet which do not allude to them alone, I might proceed to the consideration of some other of our antagonists. But before I do it, it may be well to inquire, *en passant*, how it can so often happen, that men who are eminently distinguished for their learning, and whom nature had destined to be even more humane than learned, are guilty of misrepresenting and vilifying Popery. The fact itself cannot, I apprehend, be called in question; but the causes of it may be less obvious to numbers. The causes, indeed, may vary; and as they are sometimes odious, I will not here venture to point them out. But I will venture to point out one cause, from which alone it is not difficult to account both for the illiberality of misrepresentation and the intemperance of unmerited reproach. That cause is *prejudice*, which, entering into the minds of the learned as well as of the ignorant, of the humane, as well as of the morose, spreads a cloud over the eye of reason, and, entwining itself round the heart, stints the expansion of genuine benevolence. Whoever is wise in the history of human science, or with philosophic mind has traced the characters of the learned, has frequently discovered that erudition, with all its industry, is often more remote from truth than ignorance, with all its stupidity; and that while the learned outstrip the vulgar in knowledge,

their own prejudice often outstrips their own knowledge. The case is this; when the minds of the learned are once tinctured with prejudice, they very naturally seek only for those circumstances and objects which strengthen and confirm their prejudice. Thus, if prejudice make them partial, they study most what will justify their partiality: if angry, they love best what will gratify their anger. By these principles, it is easy to account for the disengenuous methods by which the learning of our adversaries is pleased so often to assail us. Their prejudice rendering them either partial to their own establishment, or hostile to ours, they study only what may seem to justify it, and to criminate ours. They apply to their own side of the question, because they are prepossessed in its favour: and they pass over ours, because they dislike it: *malunt nescire, quia jam oderunt* *. The consequence is, they learn fifty circumstances that increase their acrimony, while they learn one that inspires respect; they imbibe a thousand unfavourable errors, while they receive one favourable truth. Another very natural consequence is, they misconceive and misrepresent our doctrines.

DOCTOR WATSON, BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

The next writer, on the temper of some of whose works I will make a few observations, is Doctor Watson. In naming Doctor Watson I am aware

* Tert. Apol.

that I name one of the greatest ornaments of this country; a great divine, a great philosopher, and a great statesman; and, what is better than all this, a good and amiable man. However, be the cause what it may, in naming Doctor Watson, I name one to whose writings, (and I allude to them alone,) the religion of Roman Catholic has not many obligations. His temperance has "seared us with a red hot iron;" his politeness honoured us with the dignified titles of "hypocrites and liars;" his orthodoxy refused us the general name of Christians; it has convicted us of being idolaters, and the sons of Antichrist. In his really valuable Letters to Mr. Gibbon, whenever the occasion presents itself to speak of Popery and Papists, (and he finds that occasion pretty frequently,) it may be remarked, that the patience and liberality with which he treats the infidel principles of his antagonist, are sure always to abandon him: and as if patience and liberality were not due to our religion, he seldom mentions it without an air of ridicule, or in terms of execration. I might cite several passages from his writings to illustrate these assertions: but I will cite only *one*, because *one* is sufficient to show the temper of the writer. In his second Letter to the above gentleman, intending to prove that the Apostles had not predicted the speedy coming of Christ, he selects, as a striking confirmation of his other arguments, the prophecy of St. Paul to Timothy *, where the Apostle admonishes the faithful to beware of the spirits of error, and the doctrines of devils, &c. "You have here," says the Doctor, "an express prophecy, in which you may

* 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

discover the erroneous tenets and the demon or saint worship of the church of Rome—*through the hypocricy of liars*—you recognize, no doubt, the priesthood and the martyrologists—*having their consciences seared with a red hot iron*—callous, indeed, must be his conscience, who traffics in indulgences—*forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats*—this language needs no pressing; it discovers at once the unhappy votaries of monastic life, and the mortal sin of eating flesh on fast days." Such is the invincible proof, that the Apostles did not foretel the speedy coming of Christ!

It is an unhappy circumstance which we meet with in the annals of literature, that the greatest abilities, when under the influence of prejudice or party, have often stooped to artifices which wisdom disavowed. Wit has degraded itself to dull vivacities, and learning laboured to convince ignorance of what it would almost seem impossible for stupidity to imagine. These are tributes which the weakness of human nature is found too often paying at the shrine of passion. But without meaning to allude in this observation to Dr. Watson, it doubtless should seem wonderful, at least, to meet with any thing like insult or illiberality in a writer who tells us, that "he feels a most insuperable reluctance to the bandying abusive arguments in public controvery;" calls invective "a dirty business, at best, which should never be undertaken by a man of any temper*;" and in some other, I don't know which of his writings, says, that "want of genuine moderation towards those who differ from us in religious opinions, seems

* Letter 6th to Mr. Gibbon.

to be the most unaccountable thing in the world." Surely the writer who is alternately so benevolent and harsh; so liberal and intemperate, is at variance with himself; or, when he professes an insuperable reluctance to abuse, he means only to all abuse except that of Popery and Papists. I wish he had inserted this exception for the credit of his works; since without it there is certainly a seeming incongruity between his profession and his conduct.

When first I read the angry passage which I have presented from the Letters of Doctor Watson, I was greatly struck with the novel application of the texts of the apostle; I paused to admire its ingenuity, and to trace its justness. As it was not easy to imagine that any thing could come from the pen of a great man, which if not luminous, would be quite unintelligible, I studied a considerable time to conceive its meaning: I read it again and again; I placed it in every point of view that my reason or imagination could suggest; but I declare that I was unable to ascertain,(as I am yet,) whether it was designed for reasoning or for wit; for a serious comment, or an entertaining joke. It is indeed probable, that, in the writer's mind, it was designed for reasoning, because the subject is serious; it is even probable, that it was designed for a demonstration, because he very confidently tells Mr. G. that he will "*recognize, no doubt;*" that he will "*discover at once, &c.*" I know not what the penetration of Mr. G. may have "recognized," either in the text of St. Paul, or in the ingenious interpretation of his commentator; but for my part, (such may be my stupidity,) I have hitherto been able to discover nothing in the interpretation, but the great credulity of

the commentator; or the unbecoming attempt to sport with the credulity of his readers.—Urged, however, by curiosity, or mortified by my own slowness of apprehension, I have since the period when I first read the passage, not only reviewed the text of the apostle; I have consulted some of his most able commentators. But I could not find that either the ingenuity of these commentators, or the wisdom of fifteen centuries, had ever conceived an interpretation which, even remotely, resembled that of Doctor Watson. To conceive such interpretation, or rather "to recognize" it, "beyond doubt;" "to discover it at once," was left to honour the invention of a few reformers, whose abilities were sharpened by the enmity which they bore to Popery. Until these men recognized it beyond doubt, the learning of every age, the wisdom of every christian commentator imagined, (so indeed does the common wisdom of common Protestants imagine, still,) that in the texts alluded to from the Epistle to Timothy, after having mentioned the general departure from faith which would take place in latter times, the manifest intention of the apostle was to point out that class of heretics, Gnostics, Encratites, Marcionites, Manichæans, &c. who asserted that marriage, flesh meat, &c. proceeded from the *Evil principle*. Let the reader, in the first text, measure his ideas of *latter times*, with the times, if he can find such, when the Church of Rome departed from the truth. His notions of *latter times* may possibly find the period of the reformation more analogous to them, than the periods which the discordant and angry heroes of Protestantism have gratuitously affixed to the supposed heresy of the Church of Rome. In the succeeding texts,

let him compare candidly the genuine tenets of the Catholic Church, with those imputed by the apostle to the teachers of whom he speaks. Whatever fanaticism or ill will may seem to discover, candour will discover all the difference between them, which exists between truth and error; between wisdom and folly.—However, it is true, if any author wishes to intrude an error on the credulity of the public, he acts wisely to do it with the boldest air of confidence; because, to some minds, the mere air of confidence gives error the effect of truth.

But probably I am mistaken: probably the above passage of Doctor Watson's Letter was not meant for a serious argument: its object may have been, by the playfulness of wit, to relax the mind, under the dulness of a dry, though interesting disquisition. If that, indeed, be the case; if the writer's intention were to make his readers laugh; then I believe he may not have been disappointed; I believe he has made many of his readers laugh.—But alas! are there not readers who will laugh at any thing; and laugh most at nonsense;—readers, to whom any dirty ridicule is wit?—How much beneath the attention of Doctor Watson are readers like these; how trifling a tribute to his talents is even their approbation and applause? However, be all this as it may. I am neither an enemy to wit or good humour: only in the name of good sense and religion, if authors must be witty, and persuade their readers by making them laugh, let them be witty on becoming subjects; make them laugh without violating charity; or, at least, let them persuade by real wit, which, as Bacon remarks, is, like the best salt, always without bitterness.

I have occasionally read the works of that irreligious class of writers, who have arrogated to themselves the title of Philosophers. I have studied the language, and traced some of the arts by which they laboured too successfully to disseminate their doctrines, to injure Christianity, and to increase the unhappy number of their followers. I did this, not for any advantage or pleasure it could possibly procure myself; but urged by curiosity, I did it to establish the comparison between the language and arts by which these men have assaulted Christianity; and the style and methods by which some Protestants have assailed the religion of Roman Catholics. Not partiality itself, if it made the comparison, could help discovering this resemblance. I have by me an instruction, composed by an adept in the school of impiety, and destined to promote the progress of what he is pleased to term philosophy, by teaching others the unhappy art of combating Christianity with success. In this the author, among many other rules, lays down the following: "Employ the most pointed irony; the most virulent invective; the most contemptuous ridicule. Let your accusations be unjust; your imputations false: it matters little; all is right that is aimed at the idol of Christianity; all just, that helps to pull down the fabric of superstition. Be sure to attribute to Christianity all the ignorance, credulity, and bigotry of the vulgar; and all the usurpations and tyranny of the great: degrade its heroes, and exalt its enemies. And then, substitute in its room a system of religion more grateful to the senses; more accommodated to reason, more consonant to prejudice. The first article of this creed shall be, that each one

believe as his fancy or reason dictates; and act as his nature prompts him. To persuade men of the wisdom and propriety of such a system, will neither be difficult nor tedious; nothing is so easy as to impose upon the vulgar: they are neither critics nor reasoners. They will read any thing that is agreeable to their passions or their prejudices; but they will examine nothing. Only induce them to read; their passions and prejudices will decide the rest. Above all, accusation is proof to them; and declamation evidence. Thus, without the difficulty of argumentation, or the awkwardness of proving, by merely insulting, declaiming, accusing, denying, confusing, and concluding; the philosophy of reason shall triumph over the philosophy of revelation; and the pure religion of nature rise upon the ruins of Christianity."

If in the above instruction we were to substitute the term *Catholicity*, in place of that of *Christianity*, it would precisely correspond to what some Protestant divines and preachers successfully practise in our regard. Whoever is conversant in the works of Protestant divines, or acquainted with the language of the Protestant pulpit, will, I am sure, acknowledge that ridicule, and misrepresentation, and invective, are there urged with as much force against Popery, as irony, and falsehood, and declamation, are employed by the *soi-disant* philosopher, against Christianity. Indeed, for my own part, I think that, speaking in general, the latter is more polite than the former. There is a coarseness in an English antipopish controversialist, that seldom occurs in a French antichristian philosophist. To break the fetters in which the poor deluded Papist groans, or rather, perhaps,

to affright the Protestant vulgar with their horrors, it matters little with some what methods they employ; say any thing of Popery, is the maxim of these men; be it truth, fable, or falsehood, all is right.—It is hence we are so often honoured with the dignified title of Demon-worshippers; our priesthood so often complimented with the pious characteristics of hypocrites and liars: hence our religion is so often termed idolatry, imposture, superstition, legendary tales, more preposterous than romances; practices that mock at reason; and maxims that render our toleration dangerous.—What wonder, while thus learning sports with truth, or prejudice with charity, what wonder, that Popery should be abhorred and the Papist hated? It is easy to trace to these sources, the streams of public ill will which flow through most of the walks of life. If Popery be abhorred, or the Papist hated, declamation and calumny are the causes. Why, I myself am acquainted with a Protestant who, scared with the abominations of Popery, either by pictures which he has seen in Protestant writers, or by descriptions which he heard from Protestant preachers, frequently protests, "*that he would rather go to hell, than become a Papist.*" I do not, indeed, believe that so very extraordinary a degree of Protestant piety is very common. But there are many who, influenced by the same causes, and in whom education should seem to render such absurdity impossible; many, whom no consideration would induce to travel in the same carriage, or to sleep a night in the same house, with a Popish priest. There is also another effect which is evidently reducible to the same causes, and which I have several times traced within the

narrow circle of my own neighbourhood. Let a man err as he pleases; become Methodist, Calvinist, Independent; let him reject all revelation; or deny, although this is horrible, the God who made him; well—all this is more easily excused than the heinous sin of becoming a Papist. Yes; let a man become a Papist, who has been notorious for his crimes, who has been a libertine, a drunkard, or what not; let him reform his conduct, and grow virtuous, chaste, and sober; such is the force of prejudice, I have frequently remarked, that his reformation has created him more ill will than his past disorders; his piety more enmity than his former licentiousness.

Vulgus ut vulgus, is an old apology for the prejudices and for the passions of the vulgar; and, indeed, it would betray both prejudice and passion not to admit, to a certain degree, the justness of such apology. The circumstances of the vulgar reduce them to the necessity of borrowing their slender notions, and particularly those of Popery, from the slender, inaccurate, partial, and illiberal notions of men, who perhaps deem it their duty to deceive them. Their ignorance renders them unable to discriminate falsehood from the truth; and their indolence makes them unwilling to adopt the methods, by which truth might be attained. The man who conceives that there exists, or ever did exist, a vulgar in any age or nation without prejudices, is unacquainted with the history of mankind: and whoever imagines that they are not easily the dupe to mere noise and declamation, is equally unacquainted with the history of the human mind. The history both of men and the human mind, is little else than the annals of the misfortunes

and follies to which prejudice gave birth, instilled by fanaticism, or impressed by the artifices of interest, ambition, or enmity. I do not know whether the English be more susceptible of prejudices than other nations; but I believe there are few or no nations, that, since the period of the reformation, have imbibed stronger religious prejudices, or suffered their reason to be more easily misled by the extravagances of error, or the deceits of sectarism, than our own. We have, even at this more enlightened period, proofs every day before us, which I deeply regret to see, with what unhappy facility and success the mere cant of hypocrisy can cheat the credulity of the vulgar; and the noise of invective and declamation impress that prejudice against the legal religious establishment, which this establishment once laboured to inspire against Popery. Methodism and sectarism, with no other arms than those which fanaticism employs to create prejudice, have made an alarming breach in the national church.

Whether it be, therefore, in teaching or exhorting in defence of our own principle, or in the attack of the principles of others, let the pure love of truth be united to the calmness of moderation. Let the temper of the mind be gentle, as the temper of religion. It certainly is a gross violation of the maxims of the mild institute which we all profess to venerate, to substitute noise for sense; insult for demonstration; or accusation for conviction. Did men even consult the sober dictates of common sense, they would conceive every departure from benevolence not only as a deviation from the duty which man owes to his fellow man; but also as an injury to the cause that was

meant to be promoted. In effect, all insult to the feelings of good sense, should rather be a presumption in favour of the cause which it attacks, than an argument for that which it so improperly defends. Insult is the instrument with which bad causes attack good ones; with which error assaults truth, and impiety virtue. If it be in the power of reason to convince, why have recourse to passion? If facts, monuments, authorities, can establish evidence, why labour to produce it from violence and misrepresentation? Passion is not reason; nor is misrepresentation reasoning.

Unfortunately, the great herd of mankind is composed of men, the easy and willing victims of passion, and the sport of ignorance, on whom insult has an omnipotent influence, and to whom misrepresentation is true, as truth itself. Whoever, therefore, traces the arts by which Popery has been attacked in this country, will cease to wonder at the mass of prejudice which exists against it, and at the spirit of animosity which glows in the breasts of its adversaries. But,

Dabit Deus his quoque finem.

We have seen and felt the dawning of liberality; and we still see and feel it brightening to that day when every cloud of prejudice will disappear, and the spirit of animosity be converted into mutual benevolence and affection.—Meanwhile, however, should insult, violence, or falsehood, continue to level at our holy establishment the efforts of their malevolence, the Catholic has this consolation; he knows that their efforts will be levelled at it in vain. Individuals,

indeed, may suffer; so may the body of Catholics within this kingdom; but the establishment to which the Catholic belongs will for ever remain triumphant. Erected by the hand of the Divinity, and protected by the divine power, it is a fabric whose sacred columns neither human violence can shake, nor the strength of hell pull down. *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it* *. Already, it has subsisted during the long lapse of eighteen centuries; empires, during this interval, have flourished and sunk to ruin: revolutions, accidents, persecutions, tyranny, have consigned to oblivion cities, men, monuments, actions, and events, which, from their importance, it would once have seemed could never be effaced from human recollection. During this time, the church is every where discernible, and every where majestic; combated, it is true, but combated only to triumph; persecuted only to acquire new glory; attacked only to display more vigour. Since the period of the reformation, the sacred edifice has been frequently attacked by arts unknown to the violence or malice of antiquity; not by the mere storm of common persecution, death, tortures, banishments, imprisonments; trite artifices of ordinary enemies! (we have, indeed, seen it even in this humane nation, attacked by all these,) but we have seen it attacked by the more ingenious arts of solemn predictions of its downfal; by holy prayers, and more holy curses to hasten that great event; by the vociferations of uncouth eloquence; by insults, falsehood, and folly. What was the consequence? Some individuals suffered; but the church continued to rear her head in awful great-

* Matt. xvi. 18.

ness; not a stone was moved from its place in the sacred edifice. However, notwithstanding the evidences which so powerfully attest the indefectibility of the Catholic church, we know, such is the nature of human prejudices, and such the positive assurance of its Divine Founder, that she will always experience opposition and meet with enemies, somewhere. We expect it; but tracing in the past the certainty of her future victories, we expect it without much solicitude. In order, then, to stay the violence, be it merely of one of our antagonists, let me remark to him the fate of those who have gone before him, in the sanctified career of vilifying us. Among these, there were many who possessed all the advantages of great abilities, great learning, and great reputation. To these they united also the greater advantage of being favoured with the aid of a prophetic spirit; permitted to read, and communicate to their followers the secrets of that mysterious volume, whose contents are unfolded only to the favourites of heaven. In their awful condemnations of Popery, they brought their assertions to evidence, and reduced nearly to *mathematical demonstration*, the year, the month, almost the very day and hour, when Antichrist and the whore of Babylon should fall! They combated Popery with such advantages, that they could not so well be said to combat as to trample on it. Pitiful fanaticism! their writings are still standing monuments of *their* folly, and of *our* wisdom; of *their credulity*, and of our strength. Such will be always the result of every effort that is aimed at Catholicity, be the cause what it may from which it proceeds; be it passion, prejudice, heresy, or incredulity. Catholi-

city, which enmity has nick-named Popery, is an edifice built upon a rock, round which the winds may howl, and the tempests heave in furious indignation: it will be always found, as it has been found hitherto, that the winds will howl in vain; and that the waves which the tempest had excited will approach and break harmless, at its foot. Every species of attempt to overturn it will for ever prove impotent;—impotent as snow-balls thrown against a citadel; feeble as human weakness against the omnipotence of the Divinity. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

DOCTOR S. BARRINGTON, BISHOP OF DURHAM.

It may perhaps to some appear wrong in me, to make any remarks upon the writings of another very eminent and very amiable member of the Protestant prelacy, the Right Rev. Doctor S. Barrington. His writings are not considerable, and he has said so little about Popery, as hardly to seem to merit a place upon the list of its antagonists. I did, indeed, pause some time before I could induce myself to hazard any observations on them, lest by reflecting upon the writer, I might appear to reflect upon the prelate; or in censuring the writings, seem to censure a character, which, with the whole nation, I respect. However, the motives which at first prompted me to withhold any reflections upon his writings, became the very motives which have induced me to bring them forward. I shall notice the writings of Doctor S. Barrington, because I respect his character: I

shall notice them, because they are a striking illustration of what I had undertaken to prove, that Protestant moderation might be more moderate, and Protestant benevolence more benevolent than it is: I shall notice them, because being recommended by the virtues of their author, they have made unfavourable impressions against Popery and Papists: in short, I shall notice them, because they are conducted upon that plan of attack, which, being the most easy, is the most common; and being apparently the most temperate, is, in reality, the most injurious.

I have extracted only one passage from one of the sermons of Doctor S. Barrington. The passage is a fair specimen of the usual temper with which, I am told, his lordship occasionally preaches against Popery. I have borrowed it from the sermon, which he preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal in the year 1799, and which was published, as is usual, at their request—"A form of Christianity," says his lordship, "exceedingly corrupt, and by its corruptions liable to the objections of thinking men, and still more exposed to the sneers and shafts of infidelity, had obtained an establishment in many of the most powerful nations in Europe. The establishment of the Popish creed, however at first acquired, has been for many years continued . . . . . not from any opinion of its evidence and truth, but from utter indifference to all religious truth whatever . . . . . Its effects upon those who conducted public affairs, or who ruled public manners, were habitual insincerity in themselves, and a neglect of that attention and of those provisions which are necessary to inculcate the principles of any religion to preserve its influence upon the people."

In this passage, good manners are not disgusted with the scurrility of low abuse; nor good taste offended with the noise of vapid declamation. I dare say that its author is incapable of either. But in this passage, or in any that resembles it, there is something more painful to the feelings of good sense, (more painful, at least, to my feelings,) something more injurious in the eye of reason, than there is either in the scurrility of abuse, or in the noise of declamation.—A general accusation, it is well known, (and the above passage is entirely such,) is always the most illiberal accusation; and nearly always the most unjust accusation. There is only evidence in the highest degree, against the accused, that can in any circumstance justify it. A general accusation is an accusation without a proof; a condemnation without the forms of trial. It is an accusation which, at best, like an universal proposition, is always suspicious, and generally erroneous,

For fallacies, in universals live.

Wisdom usually rejects, at least always pauses before it admits, a general accusation. When, therefore, a general accusation, of a nature the most serious and interesting, comes to impeach a large and respectable portion of society, and comes unsubstantiated by one slender proof, unaccompanied by one argument, I am sure that I shall not appear to say too much, if I assert not only that wisdom should pause before it admit it; but that such impeachment is disingenuous and illiberal.—Suppose it even true that Popery is "exceedingly corrupt," and Papists "habitually insincere," yet as every Papist is implicated in

such charges, they should in justice have been proved; or, by the principles of liberality, have been attempted to be proved: or else if the mere accusation were intended to be the proof, it should have been evident to the public that "Popery is exceedingly corrupt," and the Papist "habitually insincere;" more insincere than the professors of other religions; and *insincere too, from the principles of Popery.* But to assert all this is easy; to have proved it, might have been tedious.

It certainly must be owned, that all general accusation is a convenient mode of doing an injury; for to accuse requires neither learning nor ability; neither industry nor courage. Hence it is usually remarked, that it is the resource of the ignorant, and of men of slender talents; of the indolent, or of the coward, who stabs his adversary in the dark: and since men of these descriptions abound most in the walks of life, general accusation, it is also remarked, is the general mode of doing mischief. However, while I assent to the justness of these observations, I must also here remark, that the circumstances which render the use of general accusation so frequent, are the very circumstances which excite my wonder to find it employed by such a character, as Doctor S. Barrington. I wonder to behold a great man, in whose nature there is not a particle of those base ingredients which enter into the compositon of the defamer; I wonder to behold him stooping to those ignoble modes of conduct, which are irreconcileable with liberality, and repugnant to the principles of generosity. I not only wonder at the circumstance; I regret it. In an exalted character, be the mode of

accusation what it may, it is always injurious to the accused. A great character, I before remarked it, is the oracle of the public; and if such character be a bishop, he is the oracle of that servile class of mimic preachers in particular, who, too sterile to invent, re-echo his errors as the plainest truths, his insults as the effusions of pious indignation. Thus a vague unauthenticated accusation from a great man becomes frequently a serious injury, the creed of the illiterate, and the belief of many whose good will, if not soured by misconception, would have caressed those whom it now conceives it is almost religious to persecute..... But to illustrate the illiberality of general accusations, I will proceed to notice some of those which Doctor S. Barrington has employed against Popery.

"The religion of Popery," says the learned Prelate, "is exceedingly corrupt." This is a general and a vague proposition, calculated to convey the most unfavourable notion of the Catholic establishment and of its members: a proposition, therefore, which, unless it be evident, it would have been better and more charitable to have proved, than merely to have asserted. It would at least have been proper to have distinguished whether these exceedingly great corruptions belonged to our faith, respected our practices, or were inherent in our persons; or whether they regarded only a *few abuses*, which *are not the Popish creed;* and a *few individuals*, who are *not the Popish church.* In the true sense of the proposition, it applies equally to our faith, practices, and persons; to the code of Popery, and to its professors: it is a general impeachment of the Roman Catholics of this country, and of every Roman Catholic country

throughout the universe. How easy is the accusation, but how difficult would be its proof!

To justify, then, the general accusation of the exceedingly great corruptions of Popery, either these corruptions should form an evident and constituent part of our faith, practices, and morals; or some powerful attestation should be produced to substantiate the charge which imputes them to us. To know what forms the constituent parts of the Popish creed is neither very difficult nor very tedious. The Popish creed is neither perplexing by its obscurity, nor frightful by its length; it does not possess the awkward circumstance of varying in various places; of having changed with the change of times; or of having ever been retouched by the busy hands of new reformers. It is not, like our modern creeds, the outline of a pencil, or an etching, which each individual may correct or change at pleasure. What learning discovers to have been the creed of the early ages of Christianity, such, wherever Catholicity is professed, is the popish creed at present; written in characters too deep to allow us either the possibility to change, or the convenience to deny them. To come, then, to the corruptions of this creed—in what do they consist? In its mysteries? Although the mysteries of the Popish creed may offend the licentiousness of *his* reason who believes only what human reason can understand, yet there is certainly nothing in them which reason, trained to the docility of revelation, can possibly term *corruption*. They all rest upon the same basis, and are stamped with the same divine seal of authenticity, that marks any of those which the Protestant thinks is wisdom to revere.—

In its maxims and moral precepts? Even the school of infidelity has repeatedly borne honourable testimony to their purity, holiness, and sublimity.—In the form of our ecclesiastical government? Its unity and simplicity have been always the objects of general admiration; the wisdom of our adversaries themselves, men like Grotius, Leibnitz, &c. has made it the frequent subject of their praise. The chief merit of the Protestant polity of this country is its imitation of ours.—In our rites, ceremonies, and practices? These are dictated by the nature of our senses, and founded upon the principles of the human constitution. By acting feelingly upon the senses, they are calculated to convey more lively feelings to the soul. If then there be any exceedingly great corruptions in Popery, they are the effects, not of Popery, but of the ignorance or neglect of Popery; the effects not of its tenets, maxims, or practices, but of the weakness and malice of a small portion of its professors, who, acting as some men always will do under the wisest regulations, deviate from the spirit of their institute, and pervert the most sacred means to the most unbecoming purposes.

I hate comparisons: they are in general very odious things. But when a comparison contributes to shed light upon a subject, or to vindicate an insulted cause, not moderation itself can condemn it. Indeed, to compare the Catholic with the Protestant religion; to publish Protestant doctrines; to repeat what the oracles of the reformation have said and written, ought not to appear odious to a Protestant. The only odium would be, to assert in a loose, vague, unauthenticated manner, that the religion of Protestants is ex-

ceedingly corrupt, vitiated, and erroneous. I shall make an appeal, then, to the authentic doctrines and professed principles of the authors of the reformation; men whom the Protestant venerates as the envoys of heaven, sent to correct error and to re-establish truth. Are there no corruptions or errors in their doctrines? It would be painful to piety to consider, and offensive to wisdom to contemplate, the extravagance of them all. I will enumerate only a few of their opinions.—Luther, the great apostle of the reformation, teaches, for example, that the immortality of the soul is one of those monstrous doctrines that was engendered in the dunghill of Rome*; that God works in us both good and evil†; that he is just, although he necessitates us to be damned‡; that if the wife refuse the marriage debt, it is lawful to call in the maid‖; that the decalogue is useless¶. Such, with a variety of other principles which every virtuous man would blush to profess, were the tenets of *him* whom the piety or zeal of Protestantism has emphatically termed the chosen instrument of heaven. The tenets of his associate instrument Calvin, are about equally consistent with the maxims of holiness and truth. He teaches, that God is the author of all sin**; that he created the greatest part of mankind with the intent to damn them††; that man has no free-will‡‡; that all sins are equal‖‖; that when princes oppose God, (he means oppose Calvinism,)

* T. 2. fol. 107.
† T. 2. f. 444.
‡ T. 2. f. 434.
‖ T. 5. f. 123.
¶ De Capt. Bab.
** Lib. de Prædest.
†† L. de Prædest.
‡‡ Lib. 2. Inst.
‖‖ Antid. Conc. Ind.

they forfeit their authority, and it is religious to disobey them*. It would be tedious to enumerate all the absurdities and impieties to which the prolific talents of this reformer gave birth. It is easy, from the nature of these which I have cited, to conceive the nature of many others; and as my object is rather to give a notion than an adequate idea of the doctrines of the first reformers, I pass over a vast variety of them without notice. I pass over likewise the mass of immoral, profane, irreligious, and preposterous doctrines of the Zuingliuses, Bezas, Bucers, Osianders, Ochins, &c. &c. The reader may consult their works. The case is, the thing called the Reformation, broke asunder all those ties which the authority of religion and the wisdom of good sense had put on the human mind. If, as it is said, it emancipated reason, along with reason it emancipated folly; if it unrivited the chains of liberty, it also struck off the fetters of licentiousness. Never since the dawn of Christianity, did there exist an epoch so fruitful in errors, so wildly prolific of corruptions. The writings and opinions which it produced are perhaps the most striking attestations which the annals of time contain, how much reason may be abused; learning perverted; and the fairest talents prostituted to the meanest purposes.

Let it be observed that in speaking thus, I speak of the reformation in general; not of the reformation in this country. Perhaps there is not any subject on which it is more difficult to speak with precision, or any object which it is more impossible to describe with accuracy, than the reformation. The reformation

* In Dan

is a Proteus, that every where and for ever changes; puts on every shape, figure, attitude, and colour. It is a fabric, composed of the strangest mixture of materials, and disfigured with a hideous variety of awkward parts. In it, if here you see a polished stone, there you behold a rough one: if here you be pleased with an ornament; there you are disgusted with a monster: if here you find something sound; there you trace something rotten or decayed. There is no where proportion without great errors; order without great confusion; grandeur without deformity. The whole fabric is ill planned, ill founded, and ill executed: if that can be called executed, which is changing every day. I would not say that some great talents and some great men were not employed in its erection; but even prejudice will own, that many of its principal architects were men whose sole rule was their caprice; whose sole art was their violence; whose sole guide was their passions; and whose sole object was the gratification of their pride, their interest, or their lust. I might present the portraits of these men, as they have been drawn by the pencil of their admirers or associates. Though drawn to flatter, they exhibit features, which, in the more correct judgment or chaster taste of a modern observer, excite neither admiration nor respect. They were,—a Luther, whom Tillotson very properly calls a bold rough man, a fit wedge to cleave asunder a hard and knotty block; and who, as himself confesses, was aided in his plans and labours by the enlightened suggestions and industry of the devil:—a Calvin, whom now the Calvinists themselves acknowledge possessed a savage soul:—a Carlostadius, who Melancthon

tells us had neither learning, sense, nor piety:—a Zuinglius, infamous, as himself admits, for his passions and impurities:—an Œcolampedius, who, according to Luther, was killed by the devil:—an Ochin, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, and even the existence of a God:—a Beza, notorious for his seditious maxims, indecent poems, and still more indecent practices:—a Muncer, the disgrace of human nature:—a Knox, whom Dr. Johnson terms, with great propriety, the Ruffian of the Reformation:—a Cranmer, eminent for his duplicity, his inconstancy, and his amours:—an Henry the Eighth, equally odious for his immorality and his tyranny:—an Edward the Sixth, an infant prince, whose infant reason was the easy dupe to a fratricide, and an ambitious uncle:—an Elizabeth, "whose religion," Dr. Prettiman informs us, "was not pure." Such are the outlines in the portraits of the principal individuals, whose zeal, industry, and talents, contributed most effectually to erect the great fabric of Protestantism. Surely it ought neither to seem unnatural to imagine, nor immoderate to assert, that what was planned by such talents or executed by such hands, should, in the common course of things, be at best irregular, imperfect, and incomplete. In the common course of human things it should be, like the men who raised it, disorderly, vicious, and corrupted.

It is not the Papist alone who considers the system of the reformation imperfect or vicious; the multitude of Protestants who deem it almost equally so, is countless and innumerable. Else, whence the unceasing changes which almost every day, and in every country, are made for its improvement? Men

do not attempt to change what they regard as perfect. —To my mind, the system of reformation which is established by law in this country, appears at least equally wise and unexceptionable, I will say, even more wise and unexceptionable, than that of any other country. And yet how immense is the number of our Protestant countrymen who censure it as defective, or reject it as erroneous. Near a hundred sects, many of them numerous, have successively risen up to reform its errors, or to improve its improvements. All these rejected, or still reject it; some as a corrupt system of revelation; some as a corrupt system of philosophy; some as a corrupt system of Popery: all, as a system pregnant with imperfections, and vitiated with abuses. Why, even among the professors of the 39 Articles, men who from interest should support, and from principle revere them, even among these, there are many who in their writings censure them with freedom; and in their private conversation, condemn many parts of them with harshness. There are a few who do not blame a something; suggest a something to be retrenched; or a something to be altered. Like Dr. Balguy, most of them conceive that they contain at least "some ambiguities and inaccuracies; some things unphilosophical; and some things that may mislead and draw men into erroneous opinions *." Let it not then be said, that the doctrines of Popery are corrupt, as if they alone were corrupt. Let the mind cast an eye on the maxims and abuses of the reformation. In contemplating these, if it be candid, it will excuse or forget the comparatively tri-

* Dr. Balguy, page 293.

fling corruptions and abuses of Popery: and if wise, in order to prevent the reproach of Protestantism, it will hush the reproach of Popery.

But, continues Doctor S. Barrington, "Popery is liable to the objections of thinking men, &c." Another general accusation! Whoever is conversant in the writings of modern Protestants could not help remarking, as he read them, that most of the arguments which they urge against Popery are borrowed from the suggestions of human reason, or derived from the testimony of the senses. Such a doctrine, it is triumphantly objected, is absurd, is nonsense, is foolish, &c. or, what is more triumphant still, is repugnant to the evidences of the senses, and to the feelings of thinking men. The leading principle by which the antagonists of Popery are enabled to refute many of its tenets with so much ease, is neatly enough expressed in the little work which I have already cited of Doctor Porteus: it is this; "if we cannot be sure of what our senses tell us, we can be sure of nothing*." Setting out from this infallible principle, the most awful of all our mysteries is judged at once; and, by a consequence equally infallible, rejected and condemned. Armed with this principle, and tutored to this kind of logic, the most puny of our adversaries possesses more than Achillean strength against us.—I will not stop here to remark, that if the same principle and the same logic were applied to the mysteries of nature, and to the secrets of human sciences, we might, by an inference equally just, disbelieve what we know is certain; and reject what we every day experience is indisputable.—I will not stop to remark, that the mysteries of revelation being all

* Brief refutation of Popery.

impervious to the senses, the testimony of the senses is a contradiction to their nature ;—that to believe with divine faith it is essential not to see ; for "faith," as St. Paul observes, "is the substance of things that appear not." I pass over many reflections which might be made upon the nature and danger of the above arguments. But I will just observe, that if the same arguments were applied in the same manner to the mysteries of Protestantism, they would, by the same inference, refute and condemn them also.

Whoever will compare the mode of reasoning with which some Protestants are wont to combat Popery, with the methods by which the Socinian is used to attack the mysteries of revelation, will own that there is a very striking resemblance between them. The Socinian reveres, or rather, affects to revere, very sincerely the doctrines of revelation ; and very piously calls them the rule of his belief. But as he reveres his reason likewise, and conceives that if we cannot be sure of what the senses tell us, we can be sure of nothing, he regulates his faith by his reason ; composes his creed by the testimony of his senses ; and rejects whatever is repugnant to the feelings of *a thinking man*. If he do not comprehend the great mystery of the Trinity, he rejects it as *a thinking man :* if the narrowness of his capacity be unable to conceive the divinity of Jesus Christ, he rejects it as *a thinking man :* if his senses do not penetrate the sacred veil of the real presence, he rejects it as *a thinking man*, &c. Such is the method by which the Socinian is led to reprobate all mystery ; and such precisely the arguments by which the Protestant is in-

duced to spurn the mysteries of Catholicity. The principle and its application, the arms, and the art of using them, are directly alike. The only difference is in the number of consequences which the two parties are pleased to deduce.—Who does not see the pernicious tendency of such mode of reasoning? It tends immediately to the destruction of all revealed religion, of Popery, Protestantism, and of the present state of Socinianism itself. For if the rule of revelation must be decided by the rule of reason, and what is divine by the testimony of the senses, tell me, what mystery of Christianity should subsist?—Indeed, it would almost seem, that the men who reason thus, labour to place the religion of nature upon the ruins of revelation.

Far, however, am I from suspecting that the Right Rev. Preacher, whose words I have placed at the head of these reflections, is either a Socinian or a friend to Socinianism. I am convinced that he is neither: and it is hence I not only wonder much, but regret still more, to find any thing like Socinian logic in his discourse. For suppose a Protestant who has hitherto, with unsuspecting faith, piously believed and honestly professed the established religion of this country; who has questioned none of its doctrines; investigated none of its mysteries: suppose that asserting the holy rights of reason, like a thinking man, he should begin to interrogate his creed, and by the measure of his reason and the testimony of his senses, examine how much each article accorded or was consonant with either;—What in such case, ought naturally to be the consequence?—Why if, like a thinking man, he ought only to believe what his reason can compre-

hend, or venerate what the dictate of his senses might report, behold! above half the religion of Protestantism would be at once abolished. For where is the thinking Protestant whose sublimity of reason can understand, or acuteness of sense penetrate, the great mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation; the divinity and death of Jesus Christ; or even the modernized system of the real presence, original sin, justification, predestination, &c.? There are mysteries in the Protestant creed, as well as in that of Popery. And if thinking men be Protestants only because their reason can comprehend, or their senses perceive, the proportions, properties, and relations of the mysteries which they believe, either they must be more than men, or they should cease to be Protestants.

D'Alembert foretold that the Protestants would, in the series of some years, become Socinians: and he foretold it from the sole circumstances of the resemblance of their principles, and the likeness of their modes of reasoning. "Quand ils, (the Protestants,) ne seroient pas Sociniens, il faudroit qu'ils le devinessent, non pour l'honneur de leur réligion, mais pour celui de leur philosophie. Ce mot, de Sociniens, ne doit pas vous effrayer; mon dessein n'a pas été de donner un nom de parti; mais d'exposer, par un seul mot, ce qui sera infalliblement, dans quelques années, leur doctrine publique *." The reader may consult the writings, or the observer remark in the conversation of Protestants, how far this prediction of D'Alembert's is verified, and how rapidly it is hastening every day to its complete fulfilment. For my own part, I regret its progress very deeply. It is

* Lettre à Mons. Rousseau.

upon the pretended rights of reason and the evidences of the senses, that incredulity and impiety are erecting their empire. Under the delusive pretext of acting like thinking men, men not only reject Popery; they ridicule Protestantism, and mock at Christianity. As thinking men, they pity the imbecility, or sneer at the credulity of individuals, like Dr. S. Barrington and myself, who still piously venerate what the sublimity of *their* reason has proved to be but the dreams of superstition: what the lynx-eyed acuteness of *their* senses has discovered to be but the artifices of imposture. Be the mysteries, then, of Popery liable or not to the objections of thinking men; yet, since Protestantism has its mysteries likewise which are equally impervious to human penetration, it is dangerous to insinuate a prerogative which, if extended consistently, would, after rejecting Popery, for the same reasons reject Protestantism. We live in an age when the privileges of reason should be maintained with timid circumspection; and when it is unsafe to throw ridicule upon any system of religion, merely because it is liable to the objections of thinking men. I deprecate this art of reasoning, for the sake of Christianity itself.

Away, therefore, with all that pretended wisdom, which reduces revelation to the measure of the reason of thinking men; and which brings down the divine mysteries of faith to an humble system of human philosophy. Such principles, while they destroy the whole merit which arises from the docility of faith, are repugnant to the nature and notions of revelation. Neither human reason nor the senses have aught to do with the objects of revelation. The

objects of revelation are supernatural, divine, and invisible; those of reason, natural, human, or sensible. The use of reason in religion is merely to weigh the motives which render revelation credible; and to ascertain the proofs which make its admission consonant to the rules of wisdom. It has pleased the divine goodness to shed sufficient rays of light upon these proofs, not only to render it safe and prudent to believe what they recommend, but to render the disbelief an act of insolence and impiety. But then, behind these proofs, between the evidences which recommend belief and the mystery to be believed, the divine wisdom has hung a veil which no mortal eye can penetrate; which no human hand is able to draw aside. When, therefore, human reason undertakes to decide upon the modes and fitness of mysteries, upon their supposed relations and proportions, it decides upon what it is repugnant it should understand; it judges of supernatural by natural objects; of the divine nature by its own; and with bold impiety intrudes upon the rights of the Divinity.—Hence, in the investigation of the truth or falsehood of the religion of Roman Catholics, if its adversaries, instead of scrutinising its mysteries, would discuss its evidences; if instead of attempting to penetrate into the sanctuary of heaven, they would be content to trace those lines of light which conduct to it; or rather if instead of the pride of human philosophy, they would bring to the examination of our tenets the humble docility of Christian wisdom, they would be compelled to acknowledge, (if an honest acknowledgment could be extorted,) that, although our mysteries be impervious to reason, yet they are strikingly credible to reason;

and that although we do not see what we do believe, yet we see evidently what we should believe. Our mysteries are dark, but our evidences bright; our objects of faith impenetrable, but our motives of faith luminous and incontestable; satisfactory, beyond the proofs which evince any other truth, save that of the immediate establishment of Christianity. But faith is not a human gift.

I shall take notice of only one imputation more, in the discourse of Dr. S. Barrington. He informs the nation, or at least his illustrious audience, that "the effects (of popery) upon those who conducted public affairs, or who ruled public manners, were habitual insincerity, &c."—By the conductors of public affairs his Lordship means, no doubt, the men who sate at the helm of the state; ministers, magistrates, and so on. In "the rulers of public manners" he alludes, most probably, to the priesthood. This is another general, and like the past, an unauthenticated accusation: it is a general accusation of the principles of Popery; a vague accusation of a great multitude of its members: and an oblique accusation of them all. For if habitual insincerity be the natural effect of Popery, *on the conductors of public affairs and the rulers of public manners*, there is no real, nor even ostensible reason, why it should not produce the same effects on the conducted and the ruled. There is no distinct code of belief, no separate principle of morals in Popery, that is limited to any peculiar class of its professors. Our rules of belief and morals are uniform and general; equally applicable to all, to the conductors and conducted; to the rulers and to the ruled. As much as mere Popery produces effects, it

produces the same effects on all: it renders us all alike: *Hoc sumus singuli, quod et omnes:* and the reverse is equally true; *hoc sumes omnes, quod et singuli* *.

Custom has reconciled us to bear with patience a great variety of illiberal impeachments. We can in general, without any feeling of indignation, see ourselves insulted by the vilifying appellations of fools, bigots, and idolaters. Trained to hear these pious and polished epithets incessantly sounding in our ears, we are so bronzed with impudence, as only to smile at the malevolence or ignorance that dignifies us with them.—But when a distinguished prelate, from the supposed seat of truth, in the presence of the most august assembly of the universe; of men of whose good will we are ambitious, and who hold in their hands our lives, liberties, and fortunes; when he solemnly informs them, that the effect of Popery is to render men "*habitually insincere;*"—at such an imputation, from such a prelate, and before such an assembly, not only we do not smile; we shrink from it with horror and trepidation. For were what his lordship asserts believed, where is the Papist who could with consistency be trusted? Or, were what his lordship asserts true; where is the Papist who should be trusted? When it is said that the effect of Popery is to render men "habitually insincere," it is not merely the religion of Popery that is impeached; it is I myself; every Papist of this nation; every Papist of the universe, that are implicated in the odious impeachment.

If indeed it be true, that the effect of Popery is to

* Tert.

beget habitual insincerity, it is certainly commendable in his lordship to announce it to the nation. It is arming it against deceit, and preventing possibly the mischief of our hypocrisy. I believe that his lordship's word may be a sufficient proof to many, that insincerity is one of the pernicious fruits of Popery: and may arm the prudence of some with timidity of our designs. However, I think also that it would have been more liberal in his lordship, and more beneficial to the nation, had he pointed out the maxim of Popery which sanctifies insincerity; or the doctrine from which our "habitual insincerity" results. This would have been consonant at least to the habitual sincerity of his lordship: it would have prevented us from complaining; and, what is more interesting still, it would perhaps effectually have secured the public against the pernicious artifices of our cunning, or the injuries of our duplicity. This would have been honest, open, and beneficial.——I hope his lordship is acquainted with the principles of Popery.

I hate all insincerity: and could I persuade myself or be convinced that there is one principle of my religion that taught any of its professors to be insincere, I solemnly declare that I would abandon it. My reason would not suffer me to conceive that any system can be divine which inculcates insincerity; or which only tolerates and approves so heinous and so odious a disorder. There may be, indeed, in the bosom of the Catholic church, men habitually insincere; because I believe there are such every where. But I defy his lordship's learning, or all his lordship's ingenuity to prove, that there is one principle of

Popery that makes them insincere, or that sanctions their insincerity. There are malevolent, violent, uncharitable characters, in the Protestant church. But I should esteem it bad logic and bad manners to assert, that the principles of Protestantism made them such. The malevolence, violence, and injustice of the latter, like the habitual insincerity of the former, is in the *man;* not in the religion: in the *Protestant* and the *Papist;* not in Protestantism and Popery.

PROTESTANT SERMONS.

THERE is one other species of illiberality exercised against Popery, which, as it is general and injurious, induces me to make it the subject of a few reflections. It is a fact well known to almost every inhabitant of this country, that the abuse of Popery is almost every Sunday, in numberless Protestant pulpits, the standing subject with which eloquence enlivens piety; or zeal enlightens ignorance. I dare say that there is hardly one Protestant within the precincts of this Island, who has not at some period or in some place or other, heard the doctrines of Popery treated with severity; and its practices derided with all the low buffoonery of holy ridicule. The pulpit has been always, since the introduction of Protestantism, and is in many places still, the source of public prejudice, and the theatre of public animosity. It is thence that combustible materials are administered, to keep alive the fire of passion, or to enkindle those passions which bigotry has not yet inflamed. It is thence that unceasing war is declared against

us; the drum ecclesiastic beats to arms; and the martial hero of the parish drills his dull followers to the noble art of subduing us with ease:—or else, fearful lest their ardour, by the long interval of six days labour, might possibly begin to relax, inspirits them afresh to hate us with increased animosity. Such is the employment of that day which is the emblem of eternal repose; the truce from every exercise, save those of piety: such the use which is made of that sacred place, the temple of the God of charity, beneath whose hallowed vault no voices should be heard but the tender breathings of peace; —no sounds re-echo, but the gentle accents of charity and love. What a mockery of religion; what an insult to humanity!

There was a period when to preach against the Pope and Popish superstition, was, four times in the year, the standing obligation of every Protestant minister. We know how well and with what effect they were wont to perform this part of their sacred functions. Sermons upon these subjects, as it was intended, and it could hardly be otherwise, were coarse addresses to the passions, by which the Pope was easily demonstrated to be Antichrist; and Popery with equal ease, idolatry: they awoke to indignation the stupidity of the torpid, and enkindled to rage the activity of the zealous. The act or injunction which imposed this obligation, is not indeed any longer enforced by ecclesiastical authority; however, it is still unrepealed; it still stands, with many similar acts and ordinances to establish the reformation, a monument of Protestant intolerance and Protestant illiberality. But although it be not enforced, it is not

neglected ; abandoned to the discretionary zeal or piety of individuals, it is still observed, in a multitude of places, by the volunteer activity of the supposed zealots or real bigots of Protestantism. We live, it is true, in an age which, compared with the ages past, is really liberal, enlightened, and humane ; and, thank God ! the number of the Protestant clergy who are liberal, enlightened, and humane, is not inconsiderable.—However, even in an age of liberality, all are not liberal. The herd of the prejudiced and unenlightened in every communion and community, still exceeds the portion of the liberal and the wise. While the enlightened part of the Protestant ministry has, with just contempt, spurned the fanatical ordinance which condemned them to vilify us, the unenlightened, which is a very large portion, still continue to observe it ; still continue the holy function of insulting us. As if the piety of these men were irreconcileable with charity, or as if, like the Protestant ministers, whom Vossius* mentions, they conceived Protestantism in danger if they did not calumniate Popery, they incessantly renew those pious falsehoods, or vociferate those angry

* Vossius says, that he one day observed to a Protestant minister at Dort, that it was wrong to impose upon the people, though it were even in regard of Popery. What then ! answered the minister, do you mean to take the part of the Papists ? No, believe me, continued he, you cannot abuse them too much ; it is our duty to make the people detest them. Vossius informs us also, that he heard the like observations from the ministers at Amsterdam ; if we leave off preaching, they said, that the Pope is Antichrist, the people will leave our communion. Excellent vindication of falsehood and injustice !

imputations, which, by cheating ignorance and inflaming passion, have so long kept awake the spirit of acrimony, and fed the petulance of ill will. The abuse of Popery is the nerve, the soul, the essence of their eloquence. As for the Pope, unhappy creature! our religion, degraded object! they are almost sure to be dragged into the pulpit, as the first Christians were formerly into the Roman amphitheatre, to gratify the cruel curiosity of an indignant populace; to be held forth as the objects of public aversion, and the butts of public mockery.—If I undertake to pass some censure on this mode of treatment, although such censure may offend the bigotry of the men who thus unfeelingly sport with the laws of charity, yet I think it cannot be offensive to the liberal and humane. In censuring it I plead the cause, not of my own religion, but of all religion; the cause of charity, benevolence, and justice: I reprobate what the honest feelings of every unprejudiced Protestant must reprobate equally with myself.

I shall divide these heroes of the pulpit, whose ardour assails us with so much intemperance, into two distinct classes. In the former, I shall place the unenlightened and bigoted; men of slender talents and more slender knowledge; who declaim against us because declamation is an easy thing; or abuse us because abuse is consonant to their feelings. In the second class I shall include a small portion of men who are distinguished by their learning, and eminent for their talents, who vilify Popery either to prove their zeal for Protestantism, and as a step on the ladder of preferment; or from mere unhappiness of disposition, and the peevishness of illiberality.

As for the first of these two classes, the wisdom of some men would not perhaps consider it in a much more serious point of view at present than the writers of romance, or the actors of tragic nonsense. Indeed, the discourses of this class of preachers are but romances: and themselves resemble greatly the mimic actors of a farce, whose nonsense awakes the laughter or excites the pity of good sense. On the feelings of moderation, they leave no dangerous impressions. The farce ends; and the farce and the actor are forgotten. The discourses of these men are very strikingly alike: devoid of reason, reasoning, or learning, they consist entirely of misrepresentation and abuse. Where there does exist any difference in the darkness of the shades or in the coarseness of their colouring, it may be almost uniformly found, that those depict us in the most frightful features who know the least about us. The most ignorant are the most copious in their abuse; passing over every thing that resembles the true doctrines of Popery, they exult in silly triumph over what exists no where; or what exists only in the visions of their own imagination. I certainly do entertain a very high opinion of the wisdom of my countrymen, and therefore flatter myself that sermons of this description cannot *now* be seriously injurious to us. But who will deny that the preachers of such discourses are odious?—odious, because it appears to be their intention to inflame the passions of their hearers, and to render Popery and the Papist hateful:—odious, because they labour to keep alive the fire of religious bigotry, or fan the dying embers of superstition:—odious, because the natural tendency of such discourses is to put again the po-

niard into the hand of prejudice, and to call back the spirit of persecution; that spirit which has been a source of evils to this nation; which had so long disgraced our statute-books, and immolated hecatombs of guiltless victims at the shrine of fanaticism and misconception.

If only the wise and moderate were the witnesses to these effusions of ill will and rhapsodies of ignorance, I should, merely for our own sakes, rejoice at such extravagance. To minds possessed of wisdom and tempered with moderation, they would insinuate the weakness of the cause which employed them, and the force of that against which so feeble a defence was urged; they would excite disgust for the men who insulted us so grossly; and pity for the objects against which such unmerited insult was directed. If all audiences consisted of only the wise and moderate, I would compliment these heroes of the pulpit upon their laurels; and wish them joy in their well-earned victories. But, unfortunately, their audiences do not consist of the wise and moderate only. They consist principally, as all promiscuous audiences must do, of men whose ignorance is unable to discriminate falsehood from the truth; and whose feelings are sure to mistake the noise of insult for the voice of eloquence and religion. These ignorant, prejudiced, bigoted, and irritated parsons, become, therefore, the oracles of their ignorant, prejudiced, bigoted, and irritable parishioners. And hence, whoever will give himself the trouble to interrogate the knowledge and consult the feelings of the illiterate class of Protestants, will find, that although they know not the A, B, C, of Protestantism, they are learned in the lore of Popery;

and while they entertain no rational esteem for the former, they are all rancour against the latter. The fact is certain; the religion of most illiterate Protestants is a mere negative thing, made up of the disbelief of Popery. They are Protestants, not because they believe the thirty-nine Articles; but because they believe Popery to be idolatry: not because they believe the king to be the head of *their* church; but because they believe Antichrist or the Devil to be the head of ours: not because they love the system of Protestantism, but because they detest the supposed creed of Popery. The religion of a multitude of vulgar Protestants is the dictate of ignorance, not of knowledge; of prejudice, not of wisdom; of passion, not of reason. Such are the effects which proceed in part, from the sermons, whose intemperance I have presumed to censure.

As for the *effects* which these sermons, delivered to men of easy credulity, and irritable tempers, *might possibly* produce against us, I will not undertake to calculate them. But I think it is a fortunate circumstance, that between the ill will and prejudices which they are formed to beget, there is placed a palladium;—the wisdom of our laws and the liberality of our governors, which protect us from their influence, and hush the apprehension of danger. However, remove this, and what might not, what should not, the Papist very naturally expect? We recollect the sources and severity of our former persecutions. They owed their popularity to declamation, and much of their cruelty to the prejudices of the vulgar. It is only from the influence of fanaticism, kept alive by the influence of abuse and misrepresentation, that in

so humane and beneficent a nation as this, we can consistently account for the singular approbation which formerly was sure to await every act of injustice that was done to Roman Catholics. Where the voice of falsehood is mistaken for the language of religion, and the roar of invective for eloquence, it is easy to account either for the past or for future persecutions.

Quæ non his oritur funesta tragedia nugis?

I would not ask these angry zealots for the supposed cause of Protestantism, not to point out the errors of the Popish creed; nor would I solicit them not to attempt their refutation. We do not shrink from reason nor argumentation. I would not urge them to honour us with their praises; nor would I crave the favour of their commendation. All that I would request of them is, that they would cease to be unjust; and continue no longer to sport with the laws of humanity and benevolence.—But I will add a few more reflections on this species of illiberality, in speaking of what I have called the second class of our preaching antagonists.

I have before observed, that the preachers whom I have ranked in this class, are a small portion of men who are distinguished for their learning, or eminent for their talents. They are men also who I believe are in general respected in their public, and beloved in their private characters. It might be expected, therefore, that if even Popery had such men for its adversaries, they would at least be generous adversaries; that their candour would extend to Popery, and

their benevolence reach the Papist. But unfortunately it is a circumstance which we often meet with, the greatest men have faults: prejudice often resides with learning; and great illiberality often lives in the heart where some of the noblest virtues flourish. We find numberless instances of this in the annals of religious animosity. Behold, then, in the above features, what we find precisely realized in the conduct and characters of the preachers to whom I am alluding. If I understand their discourses, they appear to me absolutely to forget that universal philanthropy is a law of Christianity; and that candour is a duty which they owe to Roman Catholics. I know nothing more virulently severe, or more disingenuously uncandid; more petulantly harsh, or more illiberally insincere, than what they either boldly urge, or artfully insinuate against our religion and its professors. It is true, I remarked, the number of these antagonists is not formidable; but it is also true, that they contribute far more effectually than the class of preachers whom I have censured before, to create or perpetuate prejudice in those whom it is our interest to please, and our duty to respect. Their influence is formidable. By the reputation and popularity of their names, they often impose even upon the reason of the sensible; cheat the moderation of the virtuous; play with the unreasoning credulity of the weak; and by a consequence very natural and obvious, convert the good will of all these into asperity and malevolence.

It might be supposed, that the methods by which this distinguished class of preachers produce these great effects, would be widely different from the means by which the unlettered and the unpolished are

wont to malign and insult us. The difference of their abilities, and the difference of their educations, should give, it would seem, a difference to their modes and artifices of assailing us. Well, it is true, there is a difference, and a great one too. Instead of the coarse vulgarity of common language, in which the unlettered are accustomed to revile us, these more celebrated orators insult us in the pomp of sounding words, and the elegance of flowing sentences; instead of declamation in the style of Billingsgate, they calumniate us in the language of eloquence, and injure us by the magic of apparent wisdom. By these artifices they produce effects where the ignorant could not. But after all, abstracting from mere sound and the shape of sentences, the manner of attacking us is alike in both. In both, if their sermons were analysed, we find for proof misrepresentation; for reasoning invective; for demonstration insult. Not even the polished orator introduces the mention of Popery, but to place it in some false point of view; to treat it with the severity of reproach; or, far worse than the honest severity of reproach, the obliquity of dark insinuation.

I do not know whether I experience more contempt or admiration when I find in the discourses of these gentlemen, all the tender professions of great benevolence, all the gentle breathings of the softest and most undistinguished philanthropy. If all professions were truths, it would be true that their hearts are the seats of kindness; and that not a spark of rancour could live there for the worst of human beings. When they reprobate persecution, their indignation glows to eloquence; when they vindicate

or assert the sacred privileges of reason, of liberty of thought, and liberality of sentiment; it would seem that wisdom itself were laying down the principles of Philosophy. Miserable cant! with unhallowed plagiarism, extracted from the works of such men as the Voltaires, Rousseaus, and D'Alemberts; who talked most of liberality in order to be illiberal; of liberty to promote licentiousness; of reason with the design of undermining revelation. These are the tricks by which the mind is most easily prepared to imbibe the poison of rancour, prejudice, and misconception. For behold! no sooner does the eloquence of our great oratorial adversaries introduce to observation the doctrines of Popery or the conduct of Papists, but their liberality, which had just pitied error, is changed into indignation; their philanthropy, which had embraced every member of society, is converted into unfeeling severity and invective. They first misrepresent our doctrines; then hold them out to ridicule: first expose our conduct with infidelity; then censure it with harshness. The misrepresentation renders the ridicule consistent, and the unfaithful exposure makes the censure appear becoming. Thus our religion becomes seemingly a just object of execration; and even our niggard toleration is deemed by some a dangerous and unholy privilege. Surely, the philanthropy and benevolence of these preachers must be delicate, when even their gratitude treats thus the religion to which they owe all their present domestic comforts, their affluence, their honours, and their ease; to which they owe the charter of their liberties, and their knowledge of Jesus Christ.—I will not presume to say that these

philanthropic orators would persecute us; but I say that they impute to us doctrines and dispositions which, if true, would render our persecution natural, and perhaps becoming. We are "idolaters, impostors, lovers of human blood, dangerous citizens, &c. &c." What can constitute fitter objects for persecution? I will not assert that these men would hang us; but their discourses labour to keep alive that spirit which did hang us once; and which converted the humane tribunals of this nation into tyrant inquisitions against Popery. For my own part I should tremble, had these Preachers the power of doing every thing that their ideas of justice might suggest.

Just emerging, as the Catholics of this nation are, from a storm of almost three hundred years; a storm in which perished many of the best and noblest characters that adorn our annals; a storm which was marked by the wreck of great fortunes, and by all those evils which attend on great calamities; just emerging from such a state, and hoping that at length we were going to taste the common comforts of other men, it is peculiarly distressing to behold any thing like an attempt to replunge us into our former misery; distressing to behold any thing like the envy of our present comforts and security.—I know, indeed, that it is not in the nature of fanaticism to relent; nor to behold the pause of persecution without the snarl of disapprobation; I know too that it is not in the morbid habits of some constitutions, to contemplate the happiness of other men, without experiencing the yearnings of jealousy and discontent. Whether it be fanaticism or constitution, that gives animation to the bilious eloquence of our adversaries,

I will not say; but certain it is, that from some cause or other, they frown upon the little liberty which we enjoy; and censure the humanity that would increase it; they boldly lie when they pretend to explain our tenets, and artfully insinuate suspicion when they allude to our allegiance; in short, as I just observed, they attribute to us what, if believed, should consistently make us odious: and what if true, should perhaps deservedly make us the victims of persecution. More eloquent than our ancient enemies, they are equally intemperate. They have added a polish to *their* rusted arms; given a point to the weapons which long use had rendered blunt; and dipped them in fresh poison, envenomed as the rancour of their own malevolence.

It is principally since the amelioration of our condition, that this class of preachers have attacked us thus: it is principally since the nation has been convinced of our loyalty, and liberality has applauded the justice that rewarded it, that they have risen up to vilify our tenets.—Struck with so singular a circumstance in such an age, when religious animosity is every where subsiding to mild forbearance; and in such characters, who, in every other branch of their conduct, are said to be liberal and polite; I have endeavoured, (knowing that every effect must have its cause,) to trace the cause of this phenomenon.—I find in the annals of all our persecutions, that the supposed *growth of Popery*, even when Popery was most declining, was always one of the great pretexts to injure or insult us. I have therefore studied whether this can again be the motive which animates their anger. In order to be enabled to ascer-

tain whether Popery be on the increase or decrease in this nation, I have given myself some trouble to learn its present state; and I have weighed, moreover, some of the moral probabilities of its future state. Without laying down all the facts which I have certified, suffice it to say, that for my own part I am perfectly convinced that Popery is on the decrease in this nation. The truth is humiliating; but whoever will reflect on the nature of the times, and the circumstances of events, cannot well help believing as I do. We have, within the space of a few years, lost several of our great nobility, and men of affluence. With the loss of their example, and the loss of the resources which their former piety had supplied, the losses to Popery among their dependents, and within the wide circle of their influence, are immense.—By the French revolution we have not only been deprived of the great nurseries for our clergy; but we have been deprived of the means by which in future any thing like the usual supply of our clergy can be supported. Already many of our congregations are without Pastors: and a congregation without a Pastor, it is well known, soon goes astray. The consequences from this evil have been most serious.—In an age too when indolence and indifference, vice, luxury, licentiousness, and incredulity, have taken from every sect and society multitudes of their adherents, it is not to be imagined that these also, extending their influence to the Papists, have not also communicated with their influence their unhappy effects. Certain it is, that the corruption of the times has robbed us of a host of members, and paralised the principles of a countless multitude, who still

adhere to us by name. From these causes, then, with some secondary ones which I pass over, it is impossible with reason to suppose, that Popery is increasing in this nation. But if the timid piety of our adversaries be really alarmed upon this imaginary score, let them only reflect upon the effects of Popery; they will find in these alone, sufficient reasons to allay their apprehensions of its great diffusion. The effects of Popery are to restrain the licentiousness of passion and the liberty of thought; and this neither the taste nor temper of the age can suffer. The effects of Popery are to render men chaste, sober, temperate, and humble; and the dispositions of the times lean to all the contrary vices. Hence, since the attachment to Popery is nearly correlative with the attachment to piety, in proportion as the love of the latter decreases, so will the love of the former. The general disinclination to piety is alone a sufficient proof of the general disinclination to Popery.—But I will proceed.

Can the zeal of our preachers be excited by the losses which the Protestant establishment sustains, and the apprehension of any consequent revolution in it? As for a revolution in the Protestant establishment, I should myself be extremely sorry to behold that. But since I have shown that the danger of such a revolution cannot proceed from Popery; since few even of its losses are the gains to Popery; it is not probable that these motives can either awake their zeal or inspire their apprehension. I allow indeed that the Protestant religion, as it is established by the laws, is very sensibly on the decline. In the lower classes of society, its numbers are every day crowding the ranks of Methodism; and in the high-

er walks of life, they are thickening the lines of Deism and infidelity. The industry of fanaticism in this country is only equalled by the boldness of irreligion; and our legal establishment is, between them, frittering into parts more different far from itself than itself is from Popery. That therefore there is not room for industry and apprehension, I will not deny. There is room for both;—but it is where our preachers manifest neither. It may appear singular, that a Papist should give advice to Protestants for the benefit of the Protestant establishment; but if our eloquent adversaries be really interested for the cause of Protestantism, let them employ, not indeed the illiberality, but the *zeal* which they exert against Popery, in combatting modern innovations: let them display the powers of their abilities and the brilliancy of their eloquence, in proving the superior excellence of their own establishment: in teaching wisdom to admire it, and ignorance to respect it. Their exertions thus employed, would be usefully employed: and if they be not employed thus, I tremble with the timid for the consequences. With the decline or fall of the Protestant establishment, I augur nothing favourable to the cause of Catholicity.

If the mere petulance of animosity were attempting to account for the unusual violence or sudden efforts of any sect or establishment, it is possible, or rather probable, that it would affect to consider them as the natural symptoms of its approaching dissolution. We know that it is the fate of sects and human establishments, as it is of the human body, after the series of their growth and maturity, to decline, sicken, and die away: and as the body in its agony is most convulsed, and seems to resume new vigour, so the un-

usual exertion of any sect, society, or institute, may be regarded as the indication of its speedy extinction. The resemblance of effects in objects, which are found by experience to resemble each other, might seem to justify the boldness which drew such consequences.—However, although it be my opinion that the protestant religion, or any institution that is not divine, will, of its own nature, die away and be numbered in time among the monuments of human error, a name to amuse the curiosity of the learned; yet I am far from believing that this is at present the case with protestantism; or that the efforts of our adversaries are thus to be accounted for rationally.

If then I were asked, to what motive I would attribute their animosity? I would venture, though with reluctance, to guess what I would not venture to assert. I would venture to guess what I heartily wish may be false:—I would guess—that when the hand of eternal justice shall draw aside the veil which now conceals the springs of human actions, we shall discover that interest and the hope of preferment, were the animating motives which gave virulence to their illiberality. It is not a secret in the history of men, it is a fact well established and well known, that in the divisions of party, and above all in the divisions of religion, noise, violence, and invective, have been the arts by which interest has laboured most effectually to ensure itself success. The case is, these are easily mistaken for zeal; and, of course, naturally attain the rewards of zeal. Whoever is conversant in history will allow, that it was generally by these trite methods that ambition raised itself to the head of parties, and ability lifted itself to eminence and dis-

tinction; "pretending public good to serve their own."

I may be wrong in my conjecture respecting the source of the intemperance of our enemies. I hope I am wrong; because the motive is odious. But I am not wrong when I assert, that be the source of it what it may, it is illiberal to insult, and unjust to calumniate us: it is injurious even to the religion which they profess to revere, to defend its supposed divinity by abuse, and its truths by falsehoods. Had we, by the intemperance of our sermons, provoked intemperance, or by the severity of our writings given occasion of offence; in such cases, our modesty would forbid us to complain. Had our public conduct rendered our allegiance dubious, or our private conversation made our devotion to the present line of our monarchs suspicious; were we ever heard heaving sighs, or expressing regret, for the proscription of our Popish princes, that cause which rendered our ancestors so long the objects of political apprehension; in these cases I should cease again, if not to wonder, at least to complain. But without any of these causes, with the evidence that no such causes exist; it is certainly illiberal still to attempt to render us the objects of public ill will.—But, at least, Popery is so absurd! Well, but only then point out its absurdity calmly, rationally, liberally; in the manner in which every serious absurdity should be pointed out. Doubtless, religious discussion, conducted by the ministers of religion, should be of all others most peaceful. Such also is the nature of truth, that its most striking evidences are often invisible, amid the storms of passion: the slightest breath will some-

times divert its rays from falling upon the mind. Or, suppose a certain degree of animation be useful in the refutation of Popery, provided it be used with equity, used as it is, in refuting irreligion, Arianism, Socinianism, and the various sects of innovating Protestants; not even our moderation or partiality shall blame it. Between the established church and irreligion; or between the established church and the sects which have departed from its bosom, there is a wider difference, I have before remarked, in many instances, than between itself and Popery; and yet in the refutation of the absurdities, impieties, and errors, which either irreligion or these sects maintain, we meet with temperance, candour, liberality, and politeness. This then is all we ask for, whenever the zeal for Protestantism may prompt its advocates to combat Popery. We ask no privilege but candour; no indulgence but truth; no favour but moderation. We are willing to be refuted, not insulted; to be tried, not calumniated; to be *condemned*, provided wisdom dictate the awful sentence. Although we be idolaters, still we are men and citizens; and as such, we have a claim to the common rights of humanity and justice.

It is time that the violence which has so long disgraced the Protestant pulpit should cease; time that laying aside rancour the Protestant orator should speak his sentiments in charity; that while his eloquence extorts our praise, his benevolence may gain our love.—Benevolence can never be injurious to the cause of Protestantism. Indeed, if any thing would induce the Papist to abandon his religion, benevolence would be the most powerful inducement to it.

It is a good observation of Dr. Hey's, (I wish himself did not sometimes forget it,) that "though men may have evidence enough to act upon, they may not have enough to entitle them to insult others, or to triumph over them as being certainly in error. Indeed, those who are clearly convinced seldom insult: satisfied with themselves, they are kind and candid to others*." No doubt insult is an injury to truth, and should create suspicion against the cause that needs it. Here, therefore, is what I would propose to those preachers who have made it their custom to calumniate Popery. I will not propose too much; I will not propose to them to ascend their pulpits, which have so often re-echoed with abuse, to tell their hearers that hitherto they have sported with their credulity: I do not propose to them to say; "Dear parishioners, the application which we have made so often of the mysterious signs in the sacred Book of Revelations, to Popes and Popish doctrines, are the inventions of Protestant fanaticism, or the suggestions of Protestant ignorance: they are tales which the interested bigotry of our ancestors and our own made use of to support your faith in Protestantism; or to affright your weakness from relapsing into Popery." Liberality might say all this: but I do not propose what is half so arduous. I propose only, that, guided by that moderation which they profess to love, they would labour to suppress rancour, and to extend the divine influences of charity; that ceasing to vilify us, they would endeavour to conciliate affection for us, if not as Papists, as men, and members of society. By

* Hey, vol. 1st. p. 400.

the arts of eloquence thus exerted, the virulence of bigotry would melt away, and the ill will of our enemies be soothed to kindness: distinguishing between our supposed superstition and our persons; while they might continue to reject the former, they would in charity embrace the latter; and the Protestant and the Papist would live together in harmony. How nobly would eloquence thus employed be exerted! How deserving the best eulogies of praise would be that preacher who would display his talents in so divinely sublime a function! While ignorance and fanaticism applaud the men who foment division, wisdom and liberality would revere the orators whose enlightened eloquence thus piously laboured to suppress it.

It is not only a subject of my regret: I wonder also that, circumstanced as the Protestant establishment is at present; losing many of its members by the spread of irreligion, and still more by the indefatigable zeal of interested sectarism; I wonder that any who consult its interests or the benefit of their country, should labour to keep open the breach which exists between it and the religion of Romam Catholics. That unhappy breach is too wide already: and it is the dictate of charity, as it should be the care of policy, to close it up for ever. As for the civil constitution of this kingdom, let ignorance or malevolence deny it, if it pleases; it is certain that the principles of Roman Catholics are favourable, even fondly, partially favourable to it. Our constitution was begotten by Roman Catholics; chiefly by the Roman Catholic clergy; it was cradled, grew, matured, and received its vigour and perfection, from the care of our Catho-

lic ancestors. Surely the hand of a Catholic would never be lifted up to profane it.—As for what forms even the religious part of our present constitution, I am sure that every Catholic beholds with pain any particle frittered from its fabric to be added to the conventicles of modern heresy and superstition. After the veneration which we pay to the divine institute, to which we deem it the first and best of blessings to belong, we unanimously respect, in the next place, the Protestant establishment of this country. It is

"The least deformed, because reformed the least."

When the virulence of fanaticism shall have subsided, and the papaphobia of ignorance be done away, neither the propriety of maintaining division by abuse will be a maxim of Protestant theology; nor the wisdom of restricting us a problem of Protestant policy. The time is not far distant when it will be owned, that, although our creeds may differ, our mutual interests are intimately blended. We shall begin to appear like two neighbouring princes, whose reciprocal advantage it is to assist each other; to caress each other; and generously stand forward for each other's welfare and prosperity.

ATHEISM ATTRIBUTED TO POPERY.

Having thus briefly censured the illiberal methods with which Popery is treated by the writers and preachers of this country, I might here dismiss my subject. A general elucidation of the temper of our

antagonists was all that I had designed to include in these reflections. But, since an objection against Popery, originating in the same illiberality which I have censured, has very recently been propagated in the public mind, both from the pulpit and the press, I will give it also a place among them. It is not unconnected with my subject, as it serves as a striking illustration of the malevolence which unceasingly persecutes the cause of Popery.

The objection to which I allude is this. It is said that "our modern irreligion is the offspring of Popery; and that the horrors of the late revolution in France derived their origin from the same prolific source of guilt." The objection, though not very ingenious, has the merit of being new; and though new, has become general almost as the enmity to our religion: it has been re-echoed through half the pulpits of the nation; and instantly wafted round the Island by bigotry and prejudice. I need not add, that it has in some instances been injurious to us.—As for the refutation of so groundless and absurd a calumny, I greatly doubt whether it is wise seriously to undertake it. It is almost vilifying truth to show that it is not the source of error; and insulting the purity of religion, to prove that it is not the principle of guilt. Indeed, it is observable, that very few Catholics have deigned to discuss the malicious slander. They conceived that good sense would not believe it; and as for prejudice, where it could not hurt us, they were pretty indifferent whether it believed it or not. —Or perhaps they conceived, as I do, that the very men whose malevolent ingenuity first broached the calumny did not themselves believe it; consequent-

ly, to attempt to satisfy them, they deemed it useless and unavailing.

When evils of the horrid magnitude with those attributed to Popery are made the subjects of public instruction, it ought, no doubt, to be expected that the imputation would come forward hung round with arguments or lighted up with evidence: it should be supposed that it would be evinced, either from some principle or some practice of our religion; or at least from some consequence deduced or deducible from them. Equity requires that it should be proved, "*some how.*" For without some proof, not the *ipse dixit* of any Right Reverend in Europe, would excuse from a breach of charity not only the men who, in servile imitation, have re-echoed the injurious charge, but the uninquiring credulity of the public, who have believed it.—Yet it is true, that it has been twenty thousand times repeated; and repeated twenty thousand times, without the authority of one single proof, (perhaps it needs none, because it is an accusation of Popery!) It stands substantiated by the mere insinuations or mere assertions of a few men, whose influence over the public mind is the result of some virtues, and of great illiberality; of some abilities, and of much abuse of them.

There are occasions, I know it, when a mere assertion will gain belief, where the attempt to prove it would destroy belief. Probably the authors of the imputation felt this: and if it were wise to impose upon the public, it was wise in them only boldly to assert what they knew it was impossible to prove. Boldness, after ridicule, is the best possible substitute for proof.

It is a misfortune, I have remarked it before, which *we* have reason to lament, that very frequently the more learned among the protestant clergy, are profoundly ignorant of the true tenets of the Catholic Religion. They derive their supposed knowledge of them from streams so remotely distant from the fountain's head; and rendered, besides, so muddy, feculent, and corrupted, by the malicious industry of our enemies, that they percieve nothing of their true nature; learn little of their real properties. Their ideas of Popery are as different from what constitutes the religion of Roman Catholics, as the grossest error is from truth.—As for our moral maxims and approved religious practices, if they were examined by the eye of rational curiosity or human philosophy, neither curiosity nor philosophy would discover in them aught that is even distantly allied to vice or congenial to irreligion; nothing, on the contrary, that is not favourable to virtue and consonant to piety; nothing that does not tend, *of its own nature*, to exalt human dignity, and *in its observance*, actually exalt it. The school of French philosophy, which knew our religion far better than our Protestant divines, has often allowed this.

If our adversaries mean, (which I suspect they do, if they mean any thing,) that the impenetrable depth of the mysteries of our religion, by disgusting the pride of reason, are calculated to create irreligion—if they mean this—I will only say, it is extremely wise in them not openly to have declared it. We allow, that there are mysteries in our religion which are impenetrable to the profane eye of human reason; and which it is, therefore, natural that the pride of

reason should reject. There are tenets which impiety may ridicule; but it is the very nature of religious tenets to be at variance with impiety.—However, if mysteries be a source of incredulity, has not Protestantism its mysteries also? Is all in Protestantism plain, open, and unveiled to the eye of reason? If so, Protestantism would no longer be a system of revelation. No—Protestantism has its mysteries, not only as unsearchable as those of Popery, but in many instances more impenetrable far. That monstrous aggregate of the thing called the Reformation has been prurient, it were easy to show it, of more mysteries, and absurdities, even of more immorality and impiety, than the Coran itself. Let reason only call round it all the authors and opinions of the countless sects which, with prolific fecundity, have pullulated from its principles: which, with unholy liberty, have profaned the purity of the religion of Jesus Christ; with bold impiety insulted its divinity, debased its sublimity, lacerated and destroyed its integrity. Why, when Popery, with its mysteries and all its abuses, is placed by the side of these, it appears quite rational, quite noble and divine. And of course if the mere depth of mysteries could be the source of irreligion, the mysteries of Protestantism ought, more powerfully than those of Popery, to contribute to that unhappy consequence.

But it has been *insinuated* by a few very eminent characters, rather I believe than openly asserted, that the Atheism and irreligion of France, proceeded "from the lack of knowledge occasioned by the prohibition of the Catholic church for the laity to read the Scriptures."—As it may appear natural enough

to conceive that so stupid a thing as Atheism must repose upon the stupidity of ignorance, the above imputation may appear to many a plausible mode of accounting for it; at least, it may appear plausible to the prejudiced and the ill-informed. There is certainly much ignorance in Atheism.

It would be a convenient circumstance to the defenders of the Catholic religion, if its adversaries would always, I do not say express, but honestly insinuate, upon what specific cause they rest their accusations; and not as nearly all do, in the case of French impiety, assert vaguely and arbitrarily, that Popery is its source; that the absurdities of Popery, (God knows what,) have been the occasions of all the disasters of the revolution. The attempt to subdue such adversaries, or to refute imputations which either have no foundation any where, or exist wrapped up in the mists of the prejudices of our accusers, serves only for an useless display of strength. As the blows have no visible object to fall on, they beat the air to no purpose.—Thanks, then, to the candour of the gentlemen whose insinuations I have just stated: they have timidly presented something specific; they have enabled the Catholic to give a direction to his answer, and to aim it at that point where truth and evidence are seated.—In their charges it is insinuated, that ignorance and the privation of the sacred Scriptures, were the causes of French Atheism and French irreligion. The question is thus simplified; and instead of the long ambages about Popish absurdities and superstitions, it is melted down to the discussion of *a fact*.—For if it be true that France is the seat of Atheism, and that ignor-

ance is the cause of it; then it must be true that France was the seat of ignorance; or at least of greater ignorance than what prevailed in other nations.—If France be the seat of irreligion; and irreligion be the effect of not reading the Holy Scriptures, then in France the Holy Scriptures must have been unread, or more grossly neglected than they are in other nations.

Although the imputation of ignorance or of the want of religious knowledge to a nation like that of France, may be useful to a party to deceive the prejudiced and the uninformed; yet I wonder how it could ever have been seriously repeated or believed, by men who have either the reputation of good sense or the pretensions to knowledge. France, before the epoch of the revolution, (this will be allowed by whoever possesses any historical or local information of that country,) was overspread with nurseries of learning. The number of its universities was well proportioned to its immense population; every town was crowded with schools; and scarce was there a village, which, however destitute of other advantages, did not possess an establishment where knowledge, particularly religious knowledge, was distributed *gratis* to the poor.—To benefit from these advantages, it will not surely be said that the French did not possess the abilities or the industry. The countless constellations, or rather the boundless galaxy of its writers and learned men, are a striking contradiction of so groundless a supposition. For my own part, I believe that the French were more fitted by nature to learn with ease, than any other people of the universe. Lively, ardent, loquacious, and dis-

cerning, a French child is half learned, while our serious or less vivacious little ones are comfortably slumbering over the profound philosophy of their A, B, C. Had it been said that the *abuse* of knowledge, rather than the *lack* of knowledge, had been the source of irreligion, there would have really been something plausible in the assertion.

"But the people did not read the Scriptures in their own language." That *is* false, in general; and where the people did not read them, the fault was in themselves. The translations of the sacred Scriptures were common in France as they are in England; and as the prohibitory decrees of the Council of Trent in regard of them were not admitted in France, there was no painful restriction which rendered the reading of them unfrequent, or in the eyes of the people improper.—However, were it even true that the people did not read the Sacred Scriptures, they incessantly, which is the equivalent, heard them read and interpreted to them by their pastors, more intelligibly, more accurately, and wisely, than their own incapacity could have done it. This, to ignorance and passion, is even better far than permitting them to be read, only to be misinterpreted and abused *.

* Whoever will calculate all the errors, superstitions, impieties, and abuses, which ignorance and fanaticism have derived from the Holy Scriptures, will probably be induced to allow, that it would have been better for religion, reason, and governments, if they had been *totally withholden* from the people; or at least better if they had remained, as Dryden observes, in the *honest Latin* of St. Jerome, than have been put indiscriminately into the hands of all.

I have myself had some opportunities of ascertaining the comparative knowledge which the vulgar French, and the lower classes of my own countrymen possess of their respective religions. I say it without partiality, after making the comparison I do seriously believe, that speaking in general, the religious knowledge of the poorer French was erudition, compared with the slender notions of the poorer English. If this assertion should to any one appear the dictate of prejudice, I will present a single cause, which alone may seem to account for the striking difference: it is the method by which the minds of the French were trained to the science and practice of religion.—No sooner had a child in France been taught to lisp the language of reason, than its parents, (who it is already supposed had taught it the usual prayers for children,) were compelled to usher it into the parish church, to learn and repeat its catechism. These repetitions were exacted every Sunday of the year; with the exception sometimes of the season for the harvest. During some parts of the year, in Advent and Lent, they were exacted more frequently. A catechism in France was not like our common Protestant catechism in this country, the immense length of half a dozen questions, with the same formidable number of answers; it was a *book*, adequate from its size to contain, and by its clearness convey, a very comprehensive and accurate knowledge of religion. This was learnt verbatim by heart. The *Curé*, or his *Vicaire*, explained it: and as the French possess an ease and happiness of expression which we in general do not, they explained it clearly, naturally, and pleasingly.—The series

of these instructions was continued during the space of several years; always till the period when the child was deemed sufficiently informed to be admitted to the participation of the Holy Eucharist. The degree of knowledge which was required for this purpose, was not inconsiderable. It was required that the person to be admitted, should not only understand the importance and obligation of this sacred action, and the nature of the sacred rite; but should also be able to conceive and give a tolerable account of all the great mysteries and precepts of religion.—I might have added to this method by which the children in France attained the knowledge of religion, the attention of Parents, the assiduity of their schools, the frequency of other private and public instructions. I might add also, that the knowledge which was thus acquired in youth, was afterwards maintained, and increased by the weekly admonitions of their pastors; by sermons and discourses; by the use of the sacraments, and by the circulation and gratuitous distribution of pious books. There were circumstances in the religious education of the French, which rendered it difficult for them to be ignorant, with ease. Even the poorest that were ignorant, were ignorant amid the fairest opportunities; and in spite of the strongest inducements to knowledge.

It would be wrong to censure ignorance, where it is only the result of the absence of means to remove it. Where ignorance is not the effect of indolence, it is in general a guiltless thing. I should, therefore, regard it not only harsh, but unjust, were I to censure with severity the ignorance of the vulgar English Protestants.—Ignorant the vulgar English Protest-

ants certainly are :—ignorant not only of the Protestant principles or the thirty-nine articles, but ignorant frequently of the first elements of revelation ;—ignorant of all its mysteries ; and ignorant even of Him by whose mercy they have been redeemed. Let candour interrogate the poor upon these objects. I wish it may find the statement exaggerated. It is such as some experience has taught me to believe exact ; such as is acknowledged by several Protestant writers ; such as the Bishop of London himself, in a late charge, complains of in some parts of his own diocese. His Lordship says, they were in a "state little short of pagan ignorance and irreligion." Indeed, whoever reflects on the circumstances in which our poorer Protestants are placed, will perhaps acknowledge that ignorance is the natural result of them. If we except from the sermons of their clergy, which are generally too dry to interest, or too obscure to be understood by the illiterate ; if we except from these, and a few questions in a catechism, which is seldom I believe explained, an English Protestant must be a self-taught man ; his knowledge must be the fruit of his own investigation, and his wisdom the effect of his own private industry and zeal ; qualities which, under the pinch of poverty, the drudgery of business, and the love of dissipation, are seldom found indeed.—It is a truth which most English acknowledge who have travelled in other countries and observed the conduct of foreign Protestants, that the attention which is paid in this nation by the established clergy to the instruction of the illiterate, and the reformation of public morals, is less, very considerably less, than what is paid to these interesting objects by

the Protestant clergy of any other reformed state in Europe. It is certainly very trifling, when put in competition with the industry of the Catholic Church in France, before the epoch of the revolution.

If then effects proceed naturally from their causes, and French irreligion be the effect of French ignorance; what ought in this nation to be the effect of the grosser ignorance of our less instructed countrymen?—But, without calling in the aid of what may be considered an odious comparison, I might have proved that French atheism was not the effect of ignorance, nor the consequence of withholding the Scriptures from the people, by showing that the men who professed atheism were not the ignorant; nor those who had not read those sacred volumes. They were in general men who had some pretensions to knowledge; the half-learned, whose learning obeyed the dictates of their passions. They were some of them men of very eminent knowledge, and very distinguished abilities; the Condorcets, Volneys, Fabre D'Eglantines, Isnards.—I might have proved that French atheism was not the result of the lack of knowledge, nor of the lack of Scriptural knowledge, by merely remarking, that the French had professed the Catholic religion during the long lapse of fourteen hundred years; more ignorant, during the greatest part of that period, than they are at present; and by their ignorance more strictly precluded from the use of the Holy Scriptures; yet never was atheism observed growing from their maxims; nor irreligion engrafting itself upon their practices:—never, since the introduction of Christianity, had religion or society been much disturbed by either, till

the reformation came to instruct mankind that it is the right of reason to think as it may please, although even it may please to think wrong: the privilege of Christianity to believe what each one may judge proper, although what each one judges proper may be impious and false. Protestantism reduced revelation to an humble system of human philosophy; and the effect has been such as ought only to be expected, where human reason or human weakness, where passion and prejudice are the judges. Pleased, as it was natural, with the boundless liberty of such a principle, multitudes adopted it; and, as it was more natural still, the great body of Christianity which had been hitherto almost every where compact, was split, frittered, divided, and subdivided, into a countless variety of sects, schisms, heresies, and reformations; some wicked; some foolish; some half Christian; all of them the creatures of error, and the offspring of passion. Atheism soon grew from the same principle. And it is, perhaps, (all circumstances considered,) as natural a consequence as any other of the abandonment of the principles and authority of the Catholic religion.—I mean to show this after I have traced, in the first place, the *general causes* of irreligion.

Independently either of the above principles, or of any peculiar principles, there exists in every age and in every nation, some *general causes* of atheism and irreligion, which it is neither difficult to discover nor arduous to trace. The general causes of these evils, as they have existed and will for ever exist, are repeatedly and forcibly pointed out to us in the Sacred Scriptures; they are legible in the corruption of our

nature; and both modern experience and the acknowledgments of our modern unbelievers, render them incontestable. Irreligion, it is true, more impudent in this age than in ages past, has arrogated to itself the title of *philosophy*. But this in reality is only a veil artfully invented, to conceal what it is the interest and the instinct of passion not to discover. Nothing is in nature less philosophical, than it is; nothing less bottomed upon the principles of sense and wisdom. The *general causes*, then, of irreligion, both at present and in every age, are the corruption and weakness of the heart. In every age irreligion is the offspring of libertinism; the fruit of voluptuousness, vice, pride, luxury, and dissipation. Swift, whose experience had witnessed the growing impiety of his time, and whose sagacity had traced it to its causes, remarks, that before men became unbelievers they had always become vicious. And D'Alembert himself, whose interest it should have seemed to have concealed the interesting truth; even D'Alembert allows, that "what fills society with infidelity, is the desire of casting off the curb which religion puts on passion."

To suppose that, under the influences of religion, or under the dominion of divine grace, there should not exist, and easily exist, such things as incredulity and vice, were to betray an ignorance both of the nature of religion and of the nature of grace; both of the nature of human liberty, and of the human constitution. Be the influences of religion or the powers of grace what they may, they do not deprive the will of its liberty, nor take from the heart its inclinations: they do not act upon the soul as physical and

mechanical forces; like weights, whose effects may be measured by their gravity; or levers, whose powers may be calculated by their length. Acting in harmony or correspondence with the inclinations of the will and the dispositions of the heart, while they enlighten the docile and perfect the attentive, they neither withhold the negligent and the proud from disbelief, nor deprive the dissipated or the sensual of the unhappy liberty of becoming vicious. Amid the influences of religion the will continues free; and along with all the energies of grace liberty subsists entire.

If, therefore, instead of obeying the impulses of religion or corresponding with the insinuations of grace, men listen to the invitations of their passions and the seductions of bad example, not only vice becomes the natural consequence of their indocility; but incredulity becomes the natural consequence of vice. The first position is evident; the latter reposes upon reasons which are almost equally obvious. For let it be admitted only that the heart is corrupted, and that the dominion of vice has succeeded to the dominion of virtue; in this case it is certain that the alarms of a guilty conscience will frequently intervene to disturb the career of guilt; piety will utter its reproaches; the frown of an angry God will cast a gloom even upon the scenes of debauchery and pleasure; religion becomes a monitor, whose importunities passion cannot endure. In such situation, what consequence can appear more natural, than that guilt should tear out the sting which torments the conscience; pleasure turn away from the object which alarms it; passion shut its ears to the admonitions which condemn

it? It is unfortunately the interest of vice, pleasure, and passion, to remove every obstacle that impedes their gratification; and to do away whatever gives them uneasiness and pain: it is their interest that the truths of the gospel should be fictions; and the punishments with which it threatens them, fables and chimeras. As, therefore, men can shut their eyes to the brightest beams of light; and do actually shut them when the light becomes painful; so they may close them to the evidences of religion, and turn away from the contemplation of what is only a source of anxity and remorse. "*The sinner loves darkness better than light, because his deeds are evil.*" Indeed, while it is the *interest* of passion to *love* darkness, it is likewise the *property* of passion to *create* it. For passion spreads a cloud over the eye of reason, and frequently extinguishes the light of the understanding: it subjects the soul to the senses; and filling full the vast capaciousness of the heart, it neither loves, seeks, sees, nor admires aught, which does not tend to gratify its sensuality. Hence, having considered the interests and the properties of vice, if we consider how luxuriantly it vegetates in all the walks of life; how its votaries crowd all the circles of society; we shall cease to wonder that it rejects what condemns it, or that it has eagerly adopted the convenient creed of incredulity. I believe, for my own part, that if all the haunts of society were examined, there would be found few unbelievers who are not the public or the private slaves of passion; whose unhappy interest it is to disbelieve, because it is their unhappy interest to sin without remorse. Let any one look round the sphere in which he moves, and

examine the conduct of his acquaintance who profess incredulity. He will not discover that they are men distinguished for their virtue, their chastisy, sobriety, and moderation; men who reason with wisdom and reject revelation, because they have made it the serious subject of their study. He will find that they consist of men who sport with what virtue reveres; and laugh at what wisdom most respects. Such at least is the *general character* of the school of infidelity. It is composed of the children of libertanism and the victims of dissipation, who reject whatever is not corrupt as their own hearts, or low as their own ideas; who are profane in their professions, because they are profane in their practices; Atheists in their creed, because they are Atheists in their conduct; the worshippers of Venus, and the votaries of Bacchus.

To these general and leading causes of impiety, might be added many subaltern and inferior ones, which, aiding the cause of corruption and weakening the influences of religion, have contributed very powerfully to extend its dominion;—books, fashion, ridicule; in some, the want of time to examine the truth; in others, an unwillingness to examine it; in some, the licentiousness of an unrestrained imagination; in others, the pride and affectation of singularity: these, with occasional other correlative causes, have brought down the truths of religion into contempt; and the practices of piety into derision.—As for *the works of impiety*, I will just observe, that irreligion owes much of its growth to them. It is a very striking and a very unhappy circumstance, that a man is no sooner tainted with the maxims of infidelity,

but he labours with diabolical industry, to diffuse their poison around him; and miserable in his own perversity, studies to associate others in the same misfortune. I will not attempt to decide upon the motive of this conduct; whether it be the object of these men to lessen their own shame by uniting others in their guilt; whether it be the envy which they experience of the happiness of the true believer; whether it be the pitiful ambition to figure at the head of a sect; and the honour of beating down what wisdom and virtue have long revered; be these or any other the motives which direct their conduct, certain it is, that the professors of irreligion have laboured, and still unceasingly labour to swell the unfortunate multitude of their disciples. There is no art or artifice, which either talents possess or malice can suggest, that has not been employed to corrupt the principles of the public. The press has groaned with productions, which strikingly unite whatever can captivate the passions, and impose upon the weakness of reason; which join to the profane speciousness of argumentation, all the colouring that fancy can bestow; all the ornament that the powers of language can confer; all the charms that the lasciviousness of the imagination can impress. Wise in the science of seduction, and knowing probably, by experience, how vast is the influence which passion possesses over reason, it is to passion almost solely, that these writers make their appeal. Softly persuasive, they are for ever pressing to its lip in golden goblets, the intoxicating beverage of pleasure.—To do away the respect which the conscience may yet feel for the sacred injunctions of Christian piety,

they combat these as prejudices; or as the childish impositions of the nursery and the college: to overcome the veneration which the mind may entertain for the dictates of revelation, they attack revelation with the weapons of buffoonery; and, contrasting its doctrines with the supposed maxims of human reason, ludicrously exhibit them as a series of impostures and superstitions. We know the force of ridicule. It is the strongest arm of impiety. It will make wisdom ashamed of truth, modesty blush at virtue, and vice itself confused at not being more vicious than it is. When, therefore, the voice of ridicule is joined to the persuasions of passion, to the charms of eloquence, and the illusions of sophistry, where is the wonder that, since men will read the works of incredulity, multitudes should become its victims? The only wonder would be if they did not. I will say nothing respecting the mischievous industry with which works of this description are profusely circulated, through all the classes of society; from the palace to the cottage; and from the seats of wisdom to the lowest recesses of folly:—nothing of the versatility of style with which they are accommodated to the level of every capacity:—nothing of the pernicious cunning with which their prices are fitted to the measure of every circumstance. But to arts like these, and to the conveniences which the system of incredulity presents to the immoral, irreligion is indebted for its principal prevalence and diffusion: by these it has engaged under its banner the libertine, the voluptuous, the vain, the frivolous, and the ignorant. It is hence that to be a *philosopher* is the *ton*, the fashion of the age. Indeed, this is a circumstance too

which I should not pass over without notice: for although it be the *effect* of immorality that incredulity is become the fashion; yet the prevalence of this fashion again operates very powerfully as another *cause* of the growth of incredulity. Fashion has always a leading influence over the minds of the superficial. In our age, its influence is tyrannical; it regulates the ideas and conducts the actions of half the *coteries* and circles in society. And it is doubtless that the mere fashion of incredulity, set off by fashionable names, and fashionable titles; dignified by the appellations of philosophy; strength of mind; emancipation from prejudice, bigotry, and superstition; has engaged multitudes under its dominion who never troubled their understandings either about the supposed errors of Popery, or the real errors of Protestantism; who know little beyond the cut of a coat or gown; the points of their hunters; or the language of their hounds.

In speaking hitherto of incredulity, I may have seemed to suppose that its professors consist only of the immoral or the superficial; of the men of pleasure or the ignorant; and in that case, so great is its diffusion, my assertion I am aware will to some have appeared hazarded and rash. Besides men of the above description, it will not easily be believed that the school of incredulity does not contain many individuals whose moral character is unimpeached, and whose talents are distinguished; who are even respected for their virtues, and admired for their learning.—If there be such, I can only say that in speaking as I have done of unbelievers, I have spoken of them *in general*. I have not denied that there may

not be *some* among them who possess some moral virtues; and who unite much learning to much industry and penetration. But in my statement of their *general character*, whoever is conversant in the circles of life will, I am confident, acquiesce; and as for the exceptions from it, they are fortunately scattered so thinly through the ranks of society, that the authority of their example is not very formidable to Christianity.

Admitting, then, that there are men who disbelieve the doctrines of Christianity from principle, and rest their disbelief upon the basis of their reason; it is a matter equally easy to account for their incredulity, as it is for the impiety of the vicious.—The reflections which I am about to make upon this subject, while they present the cause of such disbelief, will likewise serve as an answer to an objection which will, very naturally, be made to what I have stated, respecting the source of incredulity in the wicked. I have attributed the incredulity of these men to their corruption. But if incredulity be the natural offspring of corruption, it will be objected or inferred, that "since corruption has been always common, incredulity should have been always common likewise; since vice has, at different periods, almost inundated the Christian universe, the contempt of revelation should also have been its companion;" circumstances which did not take place, since incredulity, as *a general evil*, is an evil of recent origin.—The objection or inference is not only specious, but founded upon the dictates of reason: and it of course becomes necessary to investigate still farther the cause of the newness of this circumstance.—This, therefore, is

what I shall do, in the account which I am proceeding to give of the infidelity of the supposed moral and learned. In it I shall show, that, while the incredulity of these is the result of a cause peculiar to these ages, the unusual diffusion of impiety has been aided by the same powerful auxiliary. The same cause will equally account for both. And to discover that cause, to trace from it the growth, progress, and prevalence of infidelity, or what the foppery of fashion is pleased to call *philosophy*, are subjects which deserve the attention of the philosopher and the divine.

If the cause to which I am going to attribute much of the evils of infidelity should appear odious to the Protestant, let it not be at least supposed that I am prompted to attribute them to it either by the suggestions of malevolence, or in order to avert the odium from my own religion. I would reprobate in myself, as I would deprecate in others, any thing that is the dictate of party, or the creature of ill will. What I shall assert, has been asserted by multitudes before me; and acknowledged by many Protestants themselves: it is not a bold affirmation without a proof; but rather itself a proof, evinced by the clearest arguments, and set round with facts.—I assert, then, that the incredulity of those men who profess to disbelieve the doctrines of revelation, *from principle;* and the *peculiar diffusion* of impiety, which distinguishes the modern from former ages, derive their origin from the maxims of the Protestant reformation; that infidelity is a natural result of its constitution; and impiety an effect which corruption at once deduces from the tendency of its principles.—I assert, also, that it is to this nation that Europe owes much of the

mischiefs, which impiety has diffused through other states or cities. Such are my assertions. Behold their proofs!

Whoever is acquainted with the first elements of the religion of Protestants, knows that the foundation upon which the faith of its consistent professors reposes, is their own private judgment and opinion.—When its first Apostles, mere individuals, rose up against the authority of the Catholic church, consistently with their departure from her bosom, and with the tenour of their conduct, they decided that her authority is fallible; her power tyrannical; and her creed erroneous.—All this, to palliate their boldness and to vindicate their rebellion, was necessary.—In the room, therefore, of the authority which had hitherto enlightened, and the jurisdiction which had conducted the faithful, they were compelled to substitute another guide, and to erect a new tribunal.—They did so. And this guide was the Holy Scriptures; the new tribunal, private judgment. To have made themselves the arbiters of revelation, and their own opinions the rule of public faith, was a piece of insolence which, after rejecting the greatest authority that the universe had ever respected, not even their arrogance presumed to intrude upon the most ignorant individual.—"No—open the Scriptures yourselves;" they very modestly cried out to all: "read them, and your own judgment will do the rest. Councils and Synods are fallible, as you are; and learning has been employed only to increase the mass of error. Read, and judge for yourselves." Such was the language of the first reformers to their followers. And indeed it was consistent. It was the only lan-

guage which they could employ with the hope or prospect of success.—It is, therefore, true, that private judgment, be that what it may—false, foolish, or impious; the dictate of ignorance or the suggestion of fancy; it is true, that private judgment is the sole arbiter of Protestant belief; the basis of the Protestant establishment; the essence of the Protestant constitution. It is so necessarily such, that do it away, and whoever admits a rule of authority in faith would be reduced, as Rousseau observes, to re-enter the bosom of the Catholic church.

When thus that power was destroyed which had restrained the licentiousness of fancy, and withheld the evagations of private judgment; when every individual, the vicious as much as the virtuous; the ignorant as well as the learned, were constituted the arbiters of their own faith, I need not say what in the common course of things should infallibly be the consequence. Formed as men are, with all their passions, prejudices, and weaknesses; viewing truth through so different mediums; and placed in so various situations to contemplate it; it is impossible that it should to all appear alike; to all equally pure, beauteous, and divine. Formed as men are, and circumstanced as are the Protestants; circumstanced, particularly, as they *were* at the æra of the reformation; emancipated from all control; observing their Apostles whom they revere as the envoys of heaven, trampling on the venerable landmarks which, since the dawn of Christianity, had restricted the overflowings of licentiousness; hearing them proclaim that all authority in faith is tyranny and usurpation; thus formed, and thus circumstanced, it

was morally impossible that the unity of truth should subsist; or that truth should not by many be regarded as an imposture; and revelation scorned as a romance. So obvious are these consequences, that Melancthon himself, when he reflected on the boundless liberty which the reformation had conferred, emphatically exclaimed, "Good God! what a tragedy are we preparing for posterity!"

It is easy to calculate what ought to be the effects of the unrestrained liberty of *judging*, by the effects which we have often seen produced from the unrestricting liberty of *acting*. Between the liberty of judging and the liberty of acting, there is an immediate connexion and similitude. Both, of themselves or abstractedly, are the best prerogatives of our nature; both, when guided by wisdom and confined to the proper sphere of their activity, are the sources of whatever is great, good, and useful, in human life. But if abused, if suffered to exceed the limits with which the Eternal Wisdom has circumscribed them, both are the greatest evils of our being, and the most prolific sources of evils to society. Let the liberty of *acting* admit no guide but inclination; no rule but the specious dictate of its own prerogatives; straight it degenerates into licentiousness, and converts the principle of happiness into the cause of private, probably of public misery. The late revolution in France is a striking instance of the evils which the workings of unawed liberty will produce. Setting out with honourable professions, and an apparent zeal for the supposed prerogatives of mankind, it no sooner acquired power but it generated mischief; and marking its progress with anarchy, raised its

throne for a time upon the ruins of human greatness, and the wrecks of human comforts—The progress and the consequences of unawed *liberty of thought* is similar. Adopting prejudice, or fancy, or inclination for its guide, it wanders soon from the path of truth, and erects the illusions of its presumption or folly into maxims of consummate wisdom.—If *prejudice* be its guide, it naturalizes its prejudices into principles; and then deduces from these consequences more pernicious than the principles themselves. It is probable, indeed, that these consequences will again be converted into principles, till religion and good sense become the scorn of impiety and folly.—If *fancy* direct the judgment, the most airy forms are turned to substances; or the most solid substances to shadows.—If *inclination*, its persuasive eloquence gives an air of truth to the grossest errors; or casts a blaze of evidence upon the most impenetrable obscurity. In short, we see and feel it every day, the mind, when left to its own guidance, is the sport of error: and as error is blind, presumptuous, and vain, it rejects whatever it cannot understand; till by an easy descent it concludes by believing nothing.—But if to a mind already seduced by error you add the force of *passion*; or unite the licentiousness of the heart to the licentiousness of the understanding; there is nothing holy in this case that they will not vilify; nothing true that they will not ridicule. Atheism is the proper offspring which so impure an union will beget.—Wherefore it is evident that, as the liberty of acting does not consist in doing what we please, but in doing only what is right; so the liberty of belief consists not in

believing what we choose, but in believing what is true.

But does not the Protestant admit a guide to direct his judgment, a monitor to dictate wisdom to his belief?—Yes, the society to which he professionally belongs, puts into his hands a book containing the divine and mysterious doctrines of revelation. But to interpret it they do not give him, they cannot consistently give him, any surer or more infallible instructor, than his own weak and fallible opinion. They put this book into his hands; and, silent, obscure, difficult, mysterious, sublime, as it is, it is from it alone that the stupidity, the caprice, the imagination of every consistent Protestant must call forth and combine the genuine system of revelation. From it ignorance must call truth; prejudice wisdom, passion the rules of piety*. Why, reason itself the most enlightened, would be perplexed in the awful dark investigation. Indeed, if reason, as it is acknowledged, be the rule and director of Protestant faith; and faith should be made to accord with the principles of *reason;* I do not well conceive how a *mysterious* code of belief could be selected from the sacred volume. Reason directs the mind to admit only what reason can conceive; and half the contents of the holy scriptures are transcendently above the reach of its conception. Thus it always appears to me, that if I had the system of my belief to form by the genuine rule of Protestantism,

* "It is the unalienable privilege of *every Christian* to form his own religious opinions, and to worship God in the manner which appears to him most agreeable to the scriptures." Sermon before the House of Lords, an. 1789, by the Bishop of Lincoln.

and by the mode of reasoning of most Protestants; if, for example, I thought proper to reject transubstantiation because I could not conceive it, or any other mystery of Popery because I thought it absurd; I do not see upon what principle or with what consistency I could admit the great tenets of the Trinity, Incarnation, or any other mystery of Protestantism, which I am equally unable to conceive; and which appear to me equally absurd, merely because they are equally impenetrable and obscure. I do not see with what wisdom I could admit any mystery, because it is the nature of a mystery to be impervious to human reason.—At least, this I think is obvious—if it be true, as the apostles of the reformation have defined it is, and as their successors are unhappily bound to admit, that private judgment is the interpreter of revelation; and that under the sanction of gospel-liberty, reason is free to determine what is wise and what is foolish; what is true and what is false; or, as Dr. Watson expresses it, "*et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat loqui*," I think it very natural to expect, formed and disposed as men are, that the tenets of religion should fall off one by one, till not one remains that is ungrateful to the dictates of fashion, or repugnant to the caprice of fancy. It is this principle or privilege that fills society with infidels, and the church with heretics: it crowds the pale of Protestantism with a kind of *half Christians*, who, unwilling or unable to do away all the prejudices or effects of their education, while they profess a very profound respect for a few less consequential mysteries of the gospel, boldly, like Sir Joseph Pringle*, strike out of

* Sir Joseph Pringle had been educated in the principles

it whatever they do not like. Thus they artfully lull their conscience to a false security, and vainly arrogate to themselves the title of *rational Christians.* Indeed, such is the nature and tendency of the principle of unlimited liberty of opinion, extending to the farthest reachings of pride, passion, prejudice, and folly; that, admitted as it is by an immense portion of society, I wonder less that any tenet of revelation should be disbelieved, than that any should be respected. Atheism is but the last link of reasoning attached to such a principle.

But, we will take a short review of the effects, which resulted from the Protestant dogma, of liberty of conscience and opinion. No sooner was the great charter of gospel-liberty proclaimed, than error, in every horrid shape, became the object of adoration; and impiety was seen venerated as the sacred dictate of religion. Religion professes hardly one truth

and reared to the practice of piety; but, seduced by the fashionable maxims of the times, he fell into incredulity. However, the force of the evidences of Christianity brought him back to its profession. But then he built his faith upon the basis of his reason; by the leading principle of Protestantism, the dictates of his private opinion. Studiously perusing the sacred scriptures, he discovered that they no where express the name or mystery of the Trinity; therefore he disbelieved it. He discovered that the pains of hell are not eternal; therefore he rejected them. He proceeded in this method with many other parts of the sacred scripture, adopting what he pleased and rejecting what he disliked, until having formed for himself a convenient and *rational* code of belief, he very graciously deigned to profess himself a Christian!

that was not denied; nor irreligion one error that was not publicly taught. Each article of revelation which piety had most revered, was by some considered as a problem; by some as an error; by some as an absurdity. Some adored Jesus as a God; some respected him as a man; some insulted him as an impostor. Some worshipped the Divinity as the author of good; some vilified him as the source of evil. The spread of error was so rapid, and the growth of incredulity so alarming, that even the authors of the principles from which these consequences were deduced, in their address to the confederates at Smalcald, complain that the devil had employed a multitude of agents to disseminate impiety. During the short period of Luther's ministry, that is, from the commencement of his revolt, an. 1517, till the period of his death, an. 1546, there were formed above two hundred organized systems of belief; and the extravagance of each system found men sufficiently extravagant to venerate them;—in several instances *to die* for them.—The case was, the reformation was a storm that tore away from the holy anchor of faith whatever was light and superficial; broke asunder those bands which had held men steady; and violently forced them into an ocean of perplexity. In this situation, the mind floated in a tide of uncertainty and doubt; and, as the weather-beaten bark veers with every wind, it obeyed the impulse of every loud declaimer; and adopted, at least for a time, the impiety of every error. "We freed ourselves," says Bolingbroke, "from spiritual tyranny, and we fell into spiritual anarchy*."

* Philosophical Essays, 4th.

It was the peculiar advantage or privilege of the reformation, that each individual possessed the same right of reforming Lutheranism, which Luther had claimed to reform the church. Hence the doctrines of Luther were early reformed by Zuinglius, Calvin, Muncer, and a hundred others. It was in vain that the great patriarch, now become sensible of the dangerous tendency of his own principles, laboured to awe these new reformers to obedience; in vain did he urge the authority of the scriptures; or the evidence of his own doctrines. Each enthusiast, or each interested fellow, produced in his own support the scriptures as well as he did; and maintained that the evidence of his own opinions was more striking than that of the great apostle. Each had the same authority for believing his own; the same right to propagate them; and the same motive to defend them. Hence, multitudes propagated their errors with success, and defended them with ability at least equal to that of Luther.—To counteract, therefore, more effectually an evil which lessened his power, and thinned the ranks of his followers, Luther boldly attempted to call back the stronger influences of jurisdiction. He endeavoured to re-establish the authority of the episcopacy; or even to substitute the civil in room of the apostolic power. He took up the very arms in his own defence, which Popery had employed against him.—The principles, indeed, which he now called in to his support, were in general wise and true; yet in him they were glaring contradictions; they raised the outcry and excited the indignation of most of the reasoning members of the reformation. "For if authority," they very properly observed, "be again ad-

mitted as a guide of faith; then it will be necessary for us all to run back to the pale of Popery. To urge the influences of authority, they continued, is counteracting his own principles; undermining the basis upon which his own power reposes; or rather, it is at once overturning the whole fabric of the reformation. Their reasoning was unanswerable by Luther; or by whoever has rejected the authority of the Catholic Church. And, therefore, even the errors which result from the unrestricted liberty of judgment, which is the great privilege of the reformation, are the consistencies of the reformation.—As for the attempts of Luther to stay the growth of impiety, it is useless to add they were ineffectual and fruitless. The tide of error continued to rise, and the swell of licentiousness increased so rapidly, that the voice which had ushered them into society, was unable to compel them to subside. Reformations, and re-reformations, and counter-reformations, were innumerable; or, as Melancthon more emphatically expresses it, "there was a war of errors, more relentless than that of the Centaurs."

There is some apology to be admitted for the great extravagances which disgraced the æra of the reformation. The reformation, if it must be called so, was not only a reformation, but a revolution: and like most revolutions, it was attended by all those mental and political excesses which are the companions of licentiousness. The reformation was the emancipation of the passions. It broke asunder the bands which had withholden error; and, of course, error became free. It struck off the fetters which had chained down impiety; and, of course, impiety

wantoned in disorder.—Indeed, if a comparison were instituted between the conduct of the first reformers, and that of the French Jacobins, in an early stage of their revolution;—between the writings of the apostles of Protestantism and those of the apostles of liberty, I do honestly believe that the extravagance, errors, and irreligion of the latter, will be found to have been equalled only by the excesses, corruptions, and impiety of the former. For a short account of these, I refer the reader to the fourth letter of Mr. Milner to Dr. Sturges.

There may be men of greater moderation than myself, who will not, so easily as I do, excuse these first effects of the reformation; who will conceive that the dawn of the reformation, which was to give back to religion its purity, its piety, and perfection, would resemble the rising of that day which first brought the doctrines of truth to light:—that its apostles should have resembled the first planters of the gospel. There are men who might expect all this, and such expectation is natural enough; but for myself, I will neither make any pointed reflections upon these circumstances, nor here deduce any obvious inferences from them. I will suppose that the first abuses of the reformation, were merely accidental; the casual ebulitions arising from the effervescence of an agitated epoch—Quitting, therefore, this period, and allowing much for the evils which disgraced it, I will proceed to another; giving time during the interval which separates the two, for passion to subside; for the mind to reflect; and for reason coolly to deduce the consequences which are contained in the leading principles of the reformation.

I might rank, as Mosheim does, not only the principles, but the most important doctrines of Socinianism, coeval with the æra of the reformation; but advancing, as I have engaged to do, beyond that period, and tracing in the historic page the series of events and the growth of opinions, I arrive, after the lapse of about twenty years from the revolt of Luther, at an epoch, when I find the first principles of the first reformers systematically digested; and consequences, equally systematically, deduced from them. I find a class of men, named Socinians, (from the name of one of their leaders,) men of profound erudition, indefatigable industry, and brilliant talents; calmly, and with serious deliberation raising upon the original basis of the reformation, the superstructure which its first architects had left unfinished. The Socinians are a sect of Protestants, nursed in the bosom of Protestantism; Protestants in their profession; and strictly Protestants in their principles. They are the Philosophers of Protestantism; its best logicians, and its most consistent disciples.—To explain the system of these men, or to develope the consequences which are hinged upon it, are objects extremely simple and incomplex. They bottom their whole system upon this principle, (the fundamental principle of Protestantism,) that reason is the sole interpreter of the rule of faith; and although the consequences which result from such a principle must be numerous, yet they may all be narrowed to this;—they believe only what their reason can conceive or understand, and reject what it cannot;—they admit what appears conformable to its dictates, and contemn as false or superstitious whatever seems repugnant to them.—

As a Catholic, I certainly do reprobate and abhor the whole system of Socinianism. But were I a Protestant, I seriously think that I should be a Socinian; because were I to admit the Protestant principle, that my reason is the sole arbiter of my faith, I think as a consistent Protestant I ought also to admit its consequences; reject whatever my reason could not conceive, and believe only what appeared consistent with its apprehensions: I would not respect one mystery and insult another; disbelieve one tenet because it is incomprehensible, and profess another which is just as unintelligible. Acting up to a principle which excludes all mystery, I would reject all. Curiosity has induced me sometimes to interrogate the Protestant, why he did not believe in Transubstantiation, the Real Presence, or some other of the mysteries of Popery? Why, said he, because they are unintelligible and absurd. The answer was precisely consonant to his rule of faith; and I rather applauded his consistency than reproved his impiety. But I asked him why he admitted the Trinity, the Incarnation, Original Sin, &c.? If he understood them, I remarked, they ceased to be mysteries and the objects of religious faith; if he did not conceive them, then, by the same rule which induced him to reject the mysteries of Popery, he ought also to reject them. He paused, but gave no answer. That there is much inconsistency in the mode of reasoning of Protestants in general, is certain. The Socinians, struck with it, very justly observe, that their Protestant brethren contradict their own leading maxim; or, stopping midway in its application, without knowing the reason why, deduce from it not half the con-

sequences which it obviously contains. They, therefore, with bold but unholy consistency, apply it to all the mysteries of revelation ; and by an obvious consequence disbelieve and reject them.

The growth and progress of Socinianism were such as might be expected from the nature of its principles; they were rapid and soon widely extended.—Multitudes of the learned became Socinians, because they already professed the maxim upon which Socinianism reposes; multitudes of the licentious, because its doctrines are grateful to their disorders. In every Protestant country ; or in every country where Protestantism subsists, its professors, although under a variety of denominations,—of Rocovians, Arians, Unitarians, Anabaptists, Latitudinarians, Arminians, &c. &c. became countless. In this country they early, and have always composed, and still compose, a large and respectable portion of the Protestant community. Indeed, wherever men are taught to bottom their faith upon the authority of their reason, Socinianism must be the creed of multitudes who affect to reason with consistency: and where the dissipated, the vain, and the ignorant, are allowed the same privilege with the wisest, Socinianism, with the long train of its errors, must crowd the walks, the circles, and recesses of society.—As for the errors, and even the impiety of Socinianism, I have no difficulty to repeat it —tracing them from the principle of Protestantism upon which they repose, they are, in general, (I think,) philosophical, logical, and obvious. The errors and impiety are in the principle, not in the reasoning; in the rule of judging, not in the conclusion which results from it. If the rule of Protestantism be wise,

I think Socinianism the wisest system of Christianity which society professes. Its errors to me appear better proved than the truths of other sectaries.

Socinianism is then the offspring of the reformation; and Deism, it cannot be disputed, is the lineal and immediate offspring of Socinianism. The Deists acknowledge the Socinians to be their fathers, although they reproach them with pusillanimity and inconsistence: they borrow from the Socinian the fundamental maxims of their incredulity, which the Socinian borrows from the authors of the reformation. The maxim that reason is the guide and arbiter of faith, is common to them all. It is the pillar that supports Deism, Socinianism, and all the multifarious sects of Protestants. As the Protestant, conducted by it, is induced to laugh at Popery: so the Socinian, led by it, derides the mysteries of revelation; and the Deist, prompted by it alone, mocks both mystery and revelation. The principle and the mode of using it are alike in the Deist, the Socinian, and the Protestant. The difference which exists between Deism and Socinianism, is only a slight shade in the colouring, or the distance of a few steps, very little separated from each other. Deism is a small extension of Socinianism; as Socinianism is a bold expansion of Protestantism. The difference between them all, is the difference of the number of conclusions which each system is pleased to draw from a principle which will prove every error, and refute every truth.

It is in error as it is in improvements. There is a growth and progress in both. The boldness of one man suggests a falsehood; the rashness of a second supports it; and the impiety or the ignorance of a

third adopts it as a truth. This is the history of the growth of deism; extended one step further, it will be found the history of atheism also. The authors of the reformation laid it down as a principle, "*that the scriptures understood in the sense which each individual judged true, is the rule of faith.*" By this rule *they* corrected, as they called it, and retrenched many of the mysteries of Popery. The Socinian adopted the same principle; but, bolder than his Protestant brethren, he reproached them with timidity in its application. He extended it farther: he extended it to all the mysteries of revelation; and, of course, rejected them. But, bolder still than the Socinian or his Protestant brethren, the Deist succeeded; and adopting only the same rule which they did, he applied it to Popery, to Protestantism; and, with as much reason, to revelation itself. He found equal mystery in them all; and as his rule prompted him to reject whatever he did not understand, he with equal reason, but with more consistency, rejected them all. For, said he to both of them, if reason be the guide of your opinions, why do you admit aught that reason does not comprehend? Why believe one mystery, and disbelieve another? Why blend with the rays of reason the mists of revelation? Revelation, where reason is the guide, is superfluous.—But either reason is a sufficient guide, he added, or it is not. If it be a sufficient guide, then discard all other authority but that of reason. If it be not a sufficient guide, then admit the necessity of one which cannot err, and run back to the pale of Catholicity.—I have observed already, that the reasoning of the Socinian appeared to me more consistent than that of any

other class of Protestants. But I spoke then from comparison. And continuing the comparison, I think that the logic of the Deist is more philosophical than that of either.

I proceed again. Error is a restless thing. When the mind has unhappily adopted the tenets of deism, and, by a series of argumentation resting upon the principles of believing only what reason can conceive, been induced to reject the whole system of Christianity, it soon, if it continue to reason, discovers that Deism itself is beset with difficulties and perplexed with many of the inconveniencies of revelation. It is not revelation only, that is obscured with clouds, and big with mysteries. The religion of nature which the Deist has adopted, presents a mist equally impenetrable, and as long a code of secrets. It has, as the Atheists have demonstrated, its mysteries, its miracles, its revelations, and contradictions. Even the common order of natural objects is a series of mystery. Hence, after having rejected the forcible evidences of Christianity; after foregoing its promises and renouncing its consolations; the Deist, when he views the uncertainty and incongruities of the creed which he has adopted, becomes uneasy, confused, restless, and distressed: agitated by fears and haunted by perplexities, he doubts of every thing. This is evidently a state of violence too painful for the mind to endure; to endure at least for any length of time. The vigour of the strongest mind which has reasoned away its reason to this stage of incredulity, shrinks under it.—Unwilling, therefore, to return to the creed which he has rejected; seldom tempted to measure back the way to the Catholic

Church, where alone error is chained down; the Deist has no other resource remaining but the last fatal step—to atheism. His passions, his perplexities urge him; and he takes it.—It is thus that doubt and scepticism generally terminate; it is the natural consequence which results from the principles which first led the mind to wander; and if we look into the annals of the Deist, we shall hardly find one who, having believed or professed the doctrines of Deism, did not finish his career, by professing the tenets of atheism. "*Il est naturel*," says Chateaubriand, who had himself been an Incredule, "*que le schisme méne a l'incredulité; et que l'atheisme se montre avec l'heresie.—Bayle et Spinoza, s'élevèrent aprés Calvin**." In confirmation of what I have said respecting the growth of atheism, I might produce the attestation of many distinguished writers, who have ranged through all the mazes of error, from Protestantism down to Universal Pyrrhonism. But I shall content myself with the opinion of the writers of the great French Encyclopedia; a class of men who, not by the dictates of their partiality to Popery, but by their knowledge of the nature of the human mind, and by the observation of its workings, had traced with philosophic eye the impiety of atheism from its source, through all the progress of the errors and evagations which conduct to its establishment. "*La Réligion Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine, est incontestablement la seule sure. . . . . Mais cette réligion exige, en méme temps, de ceux qui l'embrassent, la soumission la plus entière de la raison. Lorsqu'il se trouve, dans cette communion, un*

* Genie de la Réligion, Tome 1 ier.

*homme d'un esprit inquiet, remuant, et difficile a contenter, il commence d'abord, a s'établir juge de la verité des dogmes, qu'on lui propose a croire ; et ne trouvant point dans cet objet de la foi un dégré d'evidence, que leur nature ne comporte pas, il se fait Protestant ; s'appercevont, bientot, de l'incoherence des principes qui caracterisent le Protestantisme, il cherche dans le Socinianisme une solution a ses doutes, et a ses difficultés ; et il dévient Socinien. Du Socinianisme, au deisme, il n'y a qu'une nuance très imperceptible, et un pas a faire : il le fait. Mais, comme le deisme, n'est lui méme qu'une réligion inconsequante, il se précipite, insensiblement, dans le Pyrrhonisme, état violent, et aussi humiliant pour l'amour propre, qu'incompatible avec la nature de l'esprit humain. Enfin, il finit par tomber dans l'atheisme *."* In the generation of atheism, thus traced from the principles of deism, or rather from those of Protestantism, there is neither conjecture nor desultory speculation. It is the history of error founded upon the nature of error, and attested by experience. Indeed, say the learned authors of the late edition of the above Encyclopedia, the step from deism to atheism is *inevitable*, because there is not one objection against revealed religion, which does not fall with all its weight upon the pretended religion of nature †. (They afterwards show also that Protestantism is the parent of deism.)

There is something painful in the seeming imputation of impiety to any sect or society of men, who in reality reprobate impiety just as much as I do.—But it is not upon *men*, that I wish in the least to re-

* Article Unitaires. Tome 17. Ed. de Neuchatel.

† Art. Deisme.

flect, it is merely upon *principles*. I respect the piety of every man who adores the mysteries of revelation, and I rejoice at his credulity. But whoever weighs well the leading principles of Protestantism, must allow that if followed up with consistency by all the various forms of the human character and capacity, they extend through all the various forms of error. For, if often the plainest truth observed through different mediums, and in different situations, will not even to the wise appear alike; how, when freedom of inquiry and liberty of belief become both objects of fashion and articles of faith, sanctioned by the supposed wisdom of religion itself, and publicly inculcated by its ministers—how, under the authority of so boundless a privilege, can it be imagined that the dark and divine objects of revelation should not to different capacities appear very different—how be expected that under the influences of such a privilege, *every* species of *error* should not vegetate and multiply with rapid and prolific luxuriance?—There is not one feeling in human nature, which it is more grateful for vice, vanity, self-love, and passion to indulge, than the freedom of belief; and there is not a feeling which it is more easy to abuse. While vanity or self-love may amuse themselves with adoring the phantoms of folly, vice and passion will trample upon truth, and remove all those restraints which are obstacles to their wanton gratifications. It is the pernicious privilege of unrestrained freedom of thought, that in every age has generated heresy and falsehood; that since the æra of the reformation, has vilified Protestantism beneath its original imperfections, that has taught the Socinian to undermine revelation;

the deist to reject it; the atheist to laugh at God. Is there indeed any kind of irreligion and impiety which is not defensible by such a principle?

I will not say that it is an object of triumph to us; I will say it is an object of striking, though melancholy curiosity, to observe how uniformly and early men who had once begun to dogmatize and refused submission to the authority of the Catholic church, became victims to their own presumption, and dupes to their own passions and insubordination. I do not deny that some of these, imposed upon by the ardour of a strong imagination, set out as they conceived in the honest search for truth. But they had not proceeded far, before their prejudices or their passions, or their self-love, or their ignorance, conducted them to some false notion, which, because agreeable or congenial to their feelings, they adopted as a principle of wisdom. This they laid down as the criterion of their future reasoning, and the basis of their future conclusions. They advanced from consequence to consequence; deduced error from error; till soon wisdom was reasoned into folly, and religion into impiety.—When only one false maxim is erected into a principle of truth, the mischiefs which proceed from it exceed calculation: the progress from it to downright irreligion is not a gentle declivity, it is a precipice.—Luther, it is probable, meant only at first to reform the abuses of indulgences; but soon he denied the use of them: and next, in order to support his opinion of their inutility, he denied the necessity of good works and satisfaction; the efficacy of the sacraments, and the principles of justification.—The Socinians first attacked the merits of

Christ; then they denied his divinity.—Ochin, Spinoza, Bayle, and the whole herd of the teachers of incredulity, began their researches after truth from the first principle of Protestantism; they rested their conclusions upon its præmisæ; and the general result of their investigations was to adopt the creed of Deism, or the more dreadful code of atheism.

It were easy to confirm the genealogy which I have traced of irreligion, by the authority of dates, facts, and the attestations of writers. But I think the evidence of the genealogy is sufficiently visible, in the nature of the principle from which it commences. The ease with which every conclusion is deduced from it, may be calculated by the various tempers and general perversity of mankind. Should curiosity prompt any one to examine the authority of dates and facts, I refer them to the Histoire Dogmatique, &c. of the Abbé Bergier; the Histoire du Socinianisme, written by the Socinians themselves; to the partial Mosheim himself; or to any candid ecclesiastical historian. Even the prejudice that refuses to inquire, cannot venture to deny that the Socinians appeared soon after the reformation; the Deists soon after the Socinians; and the Atheists soon after the Deists. The order of the succession forms alone a presumption of the connexion of the system; or that they were only links which constitute the same chain. The impiety which vilifies religion, says Jurieu, (both a bigoted Protestant and a Socinian,) was generated in the bosom of Protestantism, and diffused by the disciples of Episcopius and Socinus*.

It is, therefore, obvious, that the progress to infidelity

* See Jurieu, passim; and the advertisements of Bossuet.

through Protestantism, is natural and easy. However, it is not my intention to assert that all who become infidels, become such by the slow progress of discussion, conducted by the principles of Protestantism. I have already observed, that the broad and most beaten path to infidelity is through vice. I have observed, that there are infidels who are such from no principle whatever but convenience; infidels who have never reasoned at all; or who are incapable of reasoning. The causes of infidelity are various. Before the improved sagacity of Doctor Rennell had discovered that it owed its origin to Popery, his wisdom had detected its source, artfully lurking "in the unmeaning combinations" *of a pack of cards* *!

If then a Papist, or a multitude of Papists, become unbelievers and atheists, the consequence is neither logical nor true, that Popery is the cause; it is just as unlogical and false as that Christianity is the cause; for a Papist, like the professor of any other code of Christianity, may, if once corrupted by vice or enslaved by dissipation, fall into the abyss of incredulity and irreligion.—Vice in reality and dissipation were the causes of incredulity and irreligion in France.—Or, if this should still be contested, if any believe that some more effectual cause contributed to these evils; I repeat it, no cause after these could, *of its own nature*, contribute so efficatiously to them, as the adoption of the privileges and principles of Protestantism. For, suppose only for a moment that the Pa-

* "The gamester frequently mistakes his skill for general acuteness, and *from that conceit*, either totally rejects the gospel evidences, or embraces the prevailing heresy of the times."—Sermon on Gaming.

pist nobly arrogate to himself these privileges, and employ these principles; the privileges of a thinking man and the principles of thinking and judging as he please—well, as it is easy for him to abuse these principles; easy to think and judge wrong; it is consequently easy for him to fall into error; and of course into infidelity; and, therefore, again it is easy to become an infidel through the medium of the same maxims by which the Protestant believes in Protestantism.—Or, suppose again, (for this too is possible in the Papist,) that the Papist, instead of viewing the combination of all the parts of his religion, the το Ευσυνοπτον; instead of weighing its proofs, contemplating its perfections, isolated every part; considered the subordinate without reference to his principal; compared each object with some object of the senses; studied only the arguments which militate against it; viewed only the abuses which impair and obscure its beauty: in such cases; above all, if the Papist who acted thus were corrupted or self-conceited; behold! he is perhaps a downright Atheist at once. The truth is, corruption and vice are always atheistical; and pride and self-conceitedness are easily the victims of illusion. Thus a Papist may become an infidel, although neither Popery nor Popish principles urge him to the impious act.

But I come now to that other imputation, that "Popery was the cause of all the evils of the French revolution."——That the man who can imagine that Popery could beget Atheism, should also believe that it produced the horrors which desolated France, I do not wonder. Although many other causes contributed to produce them, yet Atheism it is certain was

a common and a very prolific source of mischief. There is an intimate connexion between atheism and mischief. On the supposition, therefore, that Popery produces atheism, there is a consistency in the belief that it will produce every species of abomination. And I excuse most willingly the folly which believes the latter, on account of the stupidity that believes the former. There is just equal truth and equal grounds for belief in both; that is, both are just equally false; both are groundless calumnies, the suggestions of malevolence, or the dictates of bigotry.

In the refutation of the charge, that "Popery produced the evils of the French revolution," I shall not dwell with so much patience as I have done, in proving that it is not the source of atheism. It is perhaps useless to dwell upon it at all; because the proof that Popery does not beget atheism is a sufficient proof that it did not beget the crimes of the revolution.—Besides, not even the ill will of our adversaries has pointed out one principle of Popery that is immoral; not their ingenuity suggested one tenet that is pregnant with disorder. Neither have they proved against the papist that there was aught in his conduct which aided the cause of impiety and profanation. This, by the bye, or some part of this, ought essentially to have been proved; both to render the vindication of Popery necessary, and to make the charge against it credible.

I wonder that any Protestant should be so unwise as to object against Popery, what Popery, with greater appearance of evidence, might have objected against Protestantism. There is no room to doubt, that if an accurate comparison were made between

the principles of protestantism and the principles of Roman Catholics, as professed in France; between *the conduct* of Protestants and the conduct of Catholics, during the period of the revolution; not only wisdom and moderation, but common discernment and common candour would allow, that if either the *principles* of protestantism or catholicity; or the *conduct* of Protestants or Catholics, contributed to effect a revolution and to produce its mischiefs, it was the *principles* and *conduct* of the former, much more than the tenets or behaviour of the latter.—On this part of my subject there is no need of vague conjecture. We have the strong attestation of established dogmas, and the authority of incontestable facts.

Whoever has read the works of the ancient apostles of the Protestant Church of France, of Calvin, Beza, and their disciples; or whoever is acquainted with the constitution which these men established, knows that *Equality* is the great and fundamental tenet, both of their civil and religious creed—knows that, consistently with the above tenet, *liberty*, or a *total emancipation* not only from princely, but, where it is deemed unpleasing, from magisterial authority, is another article of their code—knows that *loyalty* or *submission* is but a tie, where independence is unattainable—that insurrection is often a *holy duty;* the right of resistance, *by any method*, an obligation which the nature and welfare of their religion sometimes impose.—These, with the consequences which it is easy to deduce from them, were some of the leading principles of protestantism in France *.

* If any be curious to know the true principles of Calvinism, relative to equality, liberty, independence, &c. let

Neither is it only in the works of the first apostles of the French reformation, that we find these principles. Their successors, through every period of the French history, have revered and taught them equally with their masters. They are the doctrine of their synods, of their preachers, writers, and professors. Indeed, they are so essentially the doctrine of French protestantism, that whoever did not profess or believe them, was not a Protestant of the French establishment.

If we examine in the annals of France how steadily the great herd of this sect were faithful, not only to the cold profession, but to the active observance of these tenets, we find that whenever circumstances presented a gleam of success, they rushed into rebellion, and laboured to establish their independence upon the ruins of legal power. From the date of their acquiring any influence in France till the reign of Lewis the fourteenth, the history of that country is little else but a series of rebellions, seditions, and their attendant horrors and excesses *. France only

him consult the works of our own countrymen, during the period of English republicanism, &c. &c.

* Sully himself, although a bigoted Protestant, yet sometimes an honest man, admits the dangerous principles and seditious manœuvres of the Protestants of his own time, even under the mild administration of their favourite prince, Henry the fourth. "Je ne puis m'empêcher," says he, "de dire, que les Protestans agissoient, en France, de manière, a n'être pas plaints, si quelque jour ils recevoient un chatiment en peu sevére." L. 18. vol. 5.—He allows, that the Protestant leaders, the Duke of Bouillon, Du Plessis, D'Aubignée, Constant, Saint Germain, Les-

became a happy and tranquil nation, when protestantism had lost the power of being rebellious with impunity.—I am not one of those who applaud the revocation of the edict of Nantes; but I think that had the principles of protestantism been expelled from France along with the Protestants, France would not yet have been revolutionized; nor should we have heard the reproach of its misfortunes absurdly cast upon that very religion, which alone withstood their progress. I was myself in France during the greatest part of the revolution; and I remember well that several distinguished writers, who had observed its origin and traced its growth with a philosophic eye, attributed much of both to the principles of Protestantism, and to the manœuvres of its professors. Indeed, it required very little philosophy either to trace the manœuvres of its professors, or to discover the resemblance of the revolutionary principles with the tenets of Protestantism. Let only an Englishman look back to the horrible period of our own history, when Calvinistic-Protestantism, through streams of blood and the midst of profanations, had reached the sovereign power. There he may trace the true principles and the true spirit of Calvinism; the same principles which guided, and the same spirit which animated, the leaders of the French revolution. There he will find that the history of our common-

diguieres, &c. subscribed an instrument, "Dont," he adds, "l'existance n'a été que trop bien prouvé, dans lequel, on jettoit les fondemens d'une république Calviniste, au milieu de la France, libre, et absolument independante du souverain." L. 22. vol. 6. The late revolution only executed what the Calvinists had planned.

wealth is the history of the French commonwealth: that ours is the prototype, and theirs a very perfect copy: rather, he will find that both are but the genuine offspring of Calvinism; whose essence it is to pull down the high, in order to exalt the low;—to resist, as Calvin expresses it, *by any method*, what the interest of their religion is pleased to term the injustices of men in power;—to destroy all the external pomp of religious worship;—to approximate to the nakedness of deism;—and, above all, to hate catholicity. Under the guidance of such principles, it is evident that there is hardly an excess which may not eventually become an act of piety; hardly a crime which, if useful to the establishment, may not be sanctified into virtue*.

If accordingly we examine in what parts of France the first excesses of the revolution were committed; if we remark in what place the first revolutionary sparks, which rose from the Parisian furnace, and were carried by the violence of the storm to the extremities of the provinces;—if we remark in what places they were most easily enkindled to a flame; it will be found almost universally true, that it was where Protestantism principally prevailed. They fell upon materials that were combustible, and which soon blazed forth with horrible conflagration. It was

* It is the observation of Dryden, while a Protestant, that "*wherever* Calvinism was planted and embraced, rebellion, civil war, and misery, attended it." Pref. to Rel. Med.—The reason is obvious; for, as Mr. Burke remarks, the Calvinists "all rose from the discord of civil strife, and their sole claim to power, in any state or city, reposes upon the ruin or oppression of its power."

at Nismes, under the auspices of Protestantism, that the first massacres of the Catholic priesthood commenced *; it was an army chiefly composed of Protestants, that deluged in blood the once happy counties of Avignon; and it was often asserted, during that period, and generally believed, that it was from the ranks of Protestantism, that the revolution selected most of those infuriated satellites, the monsters called the Marseillois, who, with unprovoked impiety, spilt the purest and the noblest blood in France.

But it will be wise to consider in what relative point of view the men who directed the revolutionary storm themselves contemplated the tenets of Catholicity, and those of Protestantism; and with what feelings they beheld the professors of each religion. The sentiments of these men, upon these objects lead to a strong presumption of the comparative tendency of the two systems.—It is a fact, ascertained by innumerable monuments, written too deeply in characters of blood to admit a doubt, that they universally deemed the principles of Catholicity to be unfavourable to their cause, and the great obstacle to the diffusion of impiety, and licentiousness. "*Si vous voulez une révolution*," the great Mirabeau used to say, "*il faut commencer par décatholiser la France*." Accordingly, "*La guerre, a la Religion Catholique; les Evêques, a la lanterne; la mort, aux Prêtres*," were the first watch-

* "The Protestants," says the author of the Anecdotes of the French Nation, "have greatly contributed towards the revolution; and it is they, perhaps, who under the protection of Necker himself, (a Protestant and their patron,) have been the secret springs of that treatment which the Catholic clergy have received." Page 191.

words of the revolution. It was at Catholicity that all its rage was directed. Catholicity was esteemed more dangerous than the principles of royalty; and zeal for its prservation less pardonable than the crime of loyalty to the monarch. The case was, the revolutionists knew that the religion of Catholics was the great source of virtue, heroism, piety, and fidelity; and, as these were the chief enemies to the revolution, they wisely conceived that by suppressing the cause of these, they should suppress these dangerous effects.——I will not draw the picture of the persecution which France exhibited against Catholicity. All Europe, even the bigotted of this nation, shrunk with horror from the scene. Had not the clergy been immensely numerous, it is probable that one stroke of policy would unceremoniously have immolated them all together, as a hecatomb, to the dæmon of impiety. But the measure was both difficult and dangerous; they therefore banished and imprisoned those whom their fears alone had not ventured to destroy. They expelled above 60,000 pastors from their flocks; and condemned above 60,000 other ecclesiastics to languish in the damp of prisons; victims to every want, and the sport of every cruelty.—Not even the feeble sex, whom anger is wont to pity, were suffered to remain unmolested. The innocent, powerless, and unoffending vestal, *because Catholic*, was every where persecuted, in many places put to death. *Whatever* was Catholic, became the object of persecution. It was the hatred of Catholicity that invented the solemn farce of *decades;* and the inexplicable nonsense of their new calendar: it destroyed almost every monument of piety; and converted

the few temples of the Divinity which it suffered to remain, into theatres of irreligion; into club-rooms, hospitals, and barracks.—Surely, if Catholicity be "congenial to atheism, and favourable to the propagation of impiety," as some of our Protestant countrymen have asserted, the very incongenial and unfavourable manner in which atheism and impiety have treated their good ally, are circumstances so paradoxical, that I think no ingenuity but their own can either penetrate or explain them.

Compare now with the above, the treatment which Protestantism experienced from the conductors of the revolution. Not merely tolerated and permitted to remain unmolested, Protestantism was zealously encouraged, befriended, and caressed. Its professors, considered as the friends of the revolution, on account of the resemblance of their principles, were early placed under the protection of the law; and guarded under the same holy banner that guarded the revolution.—In the torrents of the blood of Christian pastors which deluged France, there was not mixed one drop of the blood of one single Protestant minister. In the surrender or wreck of property, they did not lose one preaching-house, one parsonage, or one pasture *. The partiality of the revolu-

* The answer of the Protestant minister, Marron, to Bonaparte, on the occasion when the Protestant deputation waited upon him to present the congratulations of their body, on his election to the Consulship for life; presents not an imperfect notion both of the principles and conduct of the Protestants during the revolution, and of the principles and conduct of the revolutionists in their regard.

tionists to Protestantism is well attested.—Indeed, it will be allowed, such partiality was political and wise. The Protestants had a claim to all the partialities and favours, which the revolution conferred upon them. Their principles, I have observed, were the same with those of its best abettors; and their conduct was consistent with their principles. They entered eagerly into the vortex of the revolution; preached zealously its doctrines; and propagated industriously its cause. As if anxious to avenge the blood which a horrid policy, or a more horrid bogotry, had shed on the feast of St. Bartholomew, they piously joined in the harshest persecution of the Catholic clergy, and were active in some of the most tragic scenes of cruelty.*

Let it not then be said, that "Popery was the cause of the evils of the revolution," as well as the source

"Pray," said the Consul to the venerable pastor, "how did you escape the storm of the revolution?"—"This is very simple;" replied Marron, "*we faithfully* "*obeyed all those* who so rapidly succeed each other, *and* "*we were never molested.*" See the public papers for August or September, 1802. I will not make any comment upon the minister's answer. But, were its meaning given, does it not obviously seem to signify; "We were *faithful* to our lawless and unjust usurpers; and *faithless* to our lawful monarch; therefore, the usurpers did not molest us. We sacrificed our duty to our convenience; and joined in the revolution; therefore the revolution spared us."

* Notwithstanding the favours which Protestantism received from the revolution, it seems to have derived but slender advantage from them. According to the accounts which have been transmitted from France, since the re-

of atheism. While the malevolence which asserts it is criminal, the credulity that believes it is pitiful. Popery, in reality, was the only mound which withstood the tide of either; the only adversary which the revolution and atheism persecuted.—It cannot be supposed that the men who sat at the helm of the revolution, were unacquainted with the maxims either of Protestantism or Popery: they were in general men of distinguished talents and erudition. Nor can it be supposed, that they were so punily versed in the arts of cunning, as to encourage maxims that were inimical; and suppress those which were favourable to their cause. They were villians, that were deeply shrewd in all the tricks of policy.—However, it is certain that these men, with all their talents and erudition, their cunning and policy, most kindly befriended Protestantism, while they laboured to extirpate Popery. They allowed the teachers, the principles, and writings of Protestantism, the same liberty and privileges with impiety itself; while they cruelly persecuted the professors, tenets, and works of Popery.—Therefore, I think I am intitled to draw

establishment of order and tranquillity, the number of its professors have very strikingly dwindled away, within the ancient boundaries of that country. With the exception of a few old men, a few sober individuals, and a few teachers, who are interested in its preservation, Protestantism is hardly a name, where once it was popular, numerous, and formidable. Has not their principle of the freedom of religious investigation, and its consequence, the freedom of religious belief, led them to discover and believe that the religion of reason is more consonant to their principles than Protestantism; or perhaps, that no religion at all is more consonant to them than either?

this conclusion at least; that the French rulers and revolutionists judged Popery and its principles to be adverse to their cause; while they conceived Protestantism and its doctrines to be favourable to it.

It is unwise in any Protestant to impute the origin of impiety, and its attendant or subsequent mischiefs, to Popery: but for an English Protestant to attribute them to such a cause, is unwiser still: it is peculiarly indecent. Whilst it is obvious that the source of impiety was first laid open by the talents and industrious hands of the apostles of the reformation; it is notoriously true, that, until the late revolution, when it burst through every mound with which human policy had surrounded it, it diffused itself with less restraint; was circulated and spread abroad with more zeal by our countrymen, than by the inhabitants of any other nation of Europe. The English writers, by being more free, were of all others the most boldly irreligious, and the most unblushingly impious. "Never," says Leland, "in any country where Christianity is professed, were there such repeated attempts to subvert its authority carried on; sometimes under various disguises, and at other times under no disguise at all *." Mosheim asserts the same thing. "No where, he testifies, have the enemies of the purest religion, and consequently of mankind, appeared with more effrontery, than under the free governments of Great-Britain and the United States. More especially in England it is no uncommon thing to meet with books, in which not only the doctrines of the gospel, but also the perfections of the Deity, and the solemn obligations of virtue,

* View of Deistical Writers.

are called in question and turned into derision *." The impiety of our English writers must be known by all those who know the history of our literature. But as it is the nature of impiety to be contagious, and the misfortune of our worst writers to be admired, the French, within the period of the last century, began to read and relish them. England became the great school of infidelity; and English writers the oracle to whom French vanity and French corruption listened with complacent and fond attention. It was from our Herberts, Shaftsburys, Collinses, Tindals, Morgans, Hobbeses, Bollingbrokes, &c. &c. that the Voltaires, D'Alemberts, Diderots, &c. imbibed their principles of impiety. The masters were English Indeed, whoever will read the works of the French Incredules, and compare them with the writings of our English Infidels, will discover that the former are little else than the echo or translations of the latter: improved translations it is true; because impiety has the talent of improving on impiety. The French pupil is generally bolder than his English master. But it is still true that the basis of the poison is English, rendered more palatable by the sweetness of French periods, and the delicacy of French eloquence.

It is a circumstance, not perhaps generally known in this country, that the circulation of English books was very considerable in France. It was long the misfortune of the French to admire our writers; and as a great portion of our most conspicuous writers are distinguished, if not for downright impiety, at least for a boldness of principle which levels the way to impiety; by reading them, the belief of some was

* Maclaine's Translation, Vol. 6.

lost, and the faith of multitudes weakened. These effects became so visible upon the principles and morals of the people, that the circulation of English books alarmed the feelings and excited the complaints of the clergy. The wisdom of some of them was even prompted to foretel that, from this evil alone, added to the intercourse which the French courted with our irreligious countrymen, some misfortune would ere long befal their imprudent and ill-fated country. Had the prudence of the government been equal to the sagacity of these men, France would not yet have been polluted with the abominations of impiety; nor of course disgraced by the horrors of a revolution. But it is long since the government of France was distinguished for its prudence or its piety. Not only did some of its ministers permit the circulation of our most impious writings; they encouraged and applauded it: they were themselves the patrons of incredulity. The consequence was such as ought only to be expected; above all, among a people whose levity is characteristic. The pleasure of reading suggested the desire to write. Some wrote: and, as they had the misfortune to write elegantly, they were applauded in the circles of fashion; where it became a recommendation to have read them. Impiety, like vice, is contagious; and the school of irreligion increased. Soon the number of its writers, some urged by vanity; some excited by interest; some induced by the mere wantonness of vice; became countless. They teemed the poison of infidelity in copious and unceasing draughts, into the minds of the people. The contagion spread:—multitudes disbelieved.—From disbelief to revolution the

distance is but a step. The man who disbelieves is armed for every measure of excess.——Thus, English incredulity prepared the way for French incredulity. *We* sowed the seeds which the more genial soil and the warmer breezes of France brought to maturity.

TOLERATION.

I HAVE extended my reflections much beyond the limits which I had marked out for myself, when I first sat down to make them. But they stole upon me insensibly; and as they appeared to me interesting, I suffered them to grow. I will even add to them a few observations, which are not inanalogous to what I have said already, respecting the *inconsistent* mode of treatment which the Catholic experiences from the illiberality of those who dissent from his opinions.

In order to bring the reflections which I am going to make nearer to the feelings and apprehensions of common discernment, it will be proper to go back to the origin of the reformation; and to repeat some of those principles on which I have already reflected.

There is a very striking resemblance in the means and artifices by which not only the revolutions of states have been established; but by which all those changes in religion have been introduced, which error and heresy have cunningly concealed under the specious names of improvements and reformations. When faction or ambition had conceived the design of a revolution, we almost uniformly find that they

commenced the plan of its execution, by the outcry against abuses, and vociferations against tyranny. These fomented the passions of the violent, and imposed upon the credulity of the weak. As the multitude of followers increased, boldness increased with them; till, through a series of artifices and crimes, gratifying the vicious, the selfish, and the turbulent; repressing or destroying the virtuous, the temperate, and the wise; the pretended advocate for the public welfare placed himself upon the ruins of authority; and completed his career by creating grosser abuses than those which he had pretended to correct; and by fixing a heavier tyranny than that which he had affected to destroy.—In the things called reformations, the progress was similar. Every reformer, (and the countless herd of heresiarchs were all such,) set out with the professed and apparently ardent zeal for truth. They remonstrated and declaimed against abuses; they misrepresented and vilified their opponents; they gained hearers and admirers; and they finished by establishing heresy.—Thus also did the apostles of the Protestant reformation proceed. Artful, sagacious, and wary, they trod in the footsteps of those whose plans they found had been attended with success. They first insinuated the existence of abuses, and gently urged the wisdom of reforming them. Soon, for the specious interest for religion gained them abettors, they spoke more plainly. They declared that the church was immersed in errors, and its members the dupes of tyranny. Credulity and faction, and fanaticism, believed them. They then declared that Rome is Babylon; the Pope Antichrist; the Catholic an idolater. They needed now

no proof, but the boldness of the assertion. Having thus wisely laid the foundation of their own power, they concluded by erecting altar against altar; and rearing a fabric of heresy, the strongest and most formidable which christianity has beheld since the date or decline of Arianism.

But, it will be asked, *upon what principles* did these men establish the supposed divinity of their new reformation; or how evince the truth of the doctrines which they laboured to introduce? This is a question, of all others the most interesting, in the discussion of whatever regards protestantism; and upon it are hinged all the reflections which I am about to make concerning it.—When the reformers produced their doctrines and improvements, as they were new and contrary to the established dogmas of the church, they were compelled to reject her authority, and with it all those vouchers which stood as witnesses against them—councils, synods, canons, fathers, &c. &c. They discarded these, as the fallible and false testimonies of men misled by prejudice, or guided by the artifices of papal influence and tyranny. They discarded all human or public authority, *even their own*, as liable to error and subject to deceit.—In its room they substituted the sacred scriptures *only*; and they gave as their *sole* interpreter, *the solitary, private*, judgment of each individual. Read the scriptures, they called out; they alone are divine; and *your own* judgment will guide you to the evidence of their doctrines:—read them; and while you trace the falsehood of popish tenets, you will discover the beauty of truth.—These exhortations, it is useless to add, had their effect; the people read the

sacred volume; they reasoned, and judged.—We know the result of their reading and reasoning.

In all this there is some repetition; but it became in some degree necessary, in order to make the conclusion which I shall deduce from it more obvious. *Private judgment is the great basis of Protestant belief. Sentire quæ velit*, as Doctor Watson, in the words of the great Roman historian, neatly and accurately expresses it, *et quæ sentiat dicere*, is the religion of every consistent Protestant.

Before I proceed to draw any conclusion from the above principle, I might very reasonably pause here a few moments, and inquire how consistently with it any *fixed articles* of belief can be imposed upon Protestants; and imposed, as they are sometimes, upon their clergy, with the awful solemnity of an oath or conscientious declaration, that they believe them to be divine? Must not either the principle be false which declares that it is the privilege, "*the unalienable privilege*," as Dr. Prettiman calls it, "*of every Christian to form his own religious opinions**; or if true, is not the intrusion of creeds and the obligation of believing them an act of encroachment upon the liberty of the individual? Doubtless, if it be the privilege of each individual to judge for himself, and to believe as he pleases, it is wrong to chain him down to any determined creed. Creeds should be burnt, as the dictates of spiritual tyranny; for creeds, according to the maxims of Protestantism, being the opinions of men who are liable to errors and mistakes, to propose them is but proposing what is probably false; and to oblige men to swear that they believe

* Sermon before the Lords, 1789.

them, is obliging them to believe what perhaps is impious or absurd. Is there not, in all this, a solemn mockery of the principles upon which Protestantism reposes!

I do not deny that creeds are eventually wise, political, and convenient. They check the progress of error; contract the spread of impiety; and are useful to the peace and stability of governments.—Still, it is true, when compared with the principles of the reformation, they are its inconsistencies and contradictions. The utmost influence that any Protestant creed should possess over a Protestant mind, is a mere hope or presumption that it *may* be true; a mere prejudice that its fallible authors may have been infallibly conducted, in its composition.—But then, although even this presumption or prejudice may seem to render the belief of such code in some degree rational and safe, is it enough to render the solemn attestation of such belief, rational, safe, or yet unprofane? I believe that if the pill was not gilt, which men sometimes take, the stomach would reject it.

However, it is not mine to stand forward the defender or asserter of Protestant liberty. No, although I think there is much inconsistency in what I have stated to be the conduct of the Protestant establishments, yet it is an inconsistency at which I rejoice. There are many inconsistencies that are useful; and such, in my opinion, is the above inconsistency.—Having, therefore, thus far digressed, I come to the inference which alone it was my object to deduce from the great and fundamental maxim of Protestantism.—It is this—*that if each individual be the*

arbiter of his own faith; if it be "the unalienable privilege of every Christian to form his own religious opinions;" it is inconsistent, intolerant, and illiberal in the Protestant, to restrain the belief or to stint the religion of Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic, in believing the creed of Catholicity, believes what he pleases; and in that he but makes use of the privilege of the reformation: he believes what his reason tells him is divine; and in believing that, he but exercises what Protestantism terms the right of nature and Christianity. He compares the tenets of his religion with the texts of the Sacred Scripture; he judges that they agree; and in comparing and judging, he precisely follows the Protestant rule of faith. Yes, suppose even what he believed were nonsense; yet merely because he conceived it proper to believe it—it is, by the principles of Protestantism, his right—his unalienable right to believe it; and the Protestant that would deny him that right, would deny the only tenet of Protestantism which it is heretical in the Protestant to call in question; would wish to control what he professes to be uncontrollable; and to chain down what he proclaims to be free as liberty itself.

The Protestant frequently censures the intolerant spirit of the Roman Catholic. There is no principle of our religion that has inspired his invectives with greater warmth. Indeed, where Catholic intolerance verges, (though that is not its nature,) to persecution, I censure it likewise. But after all, Catholic intolerance is not, like Protestant intolerance, inconsistent and absurd. The Catholic believes that the society to which he belongs is infallible; and

therefore in obliging men to believe with him, he obliges them, *he is assured*, only to believe the truth : —he believes that his religion is divine, and that faith is one ; therefore, he considers all difference of opinion respecting it as licentiousness ; and all denial of its tenets as heresy or error. In this kind of intolerance, which is the only intolerance of Catholics, there is neither inconsistence nor violation of charity.

But, without any pretexts of this nature to intolerance ; with principles directly opposed to these pretexts ; without infallibility ; without claiming an exemption from error ; with the acknowledgment that faith is free, and that private judgment is its interpreter :—with these principles, and these professions, when I infer that Protestant intolerance to Roman Catholics is an inconsistency, I think I draw an inference both theologically and logically accurate. I think the inference just that, with Protestant maxims, to restrict the belief of Catholicity is a positive contradiction of the leading tenet of Protestantism.—Yes, if the Protestant conceives his rule of faith to be wise ; if *all* be allowed to judge and believe as they please ; let the Papist be allowed the same privilege. If the Protestant be free to err ; let the Papist be suffered to believe the truth ; or if all have a right to quit the Catholic church, let all who think proper be permitted to dissent from the Protestant church. At all events, let the Catholic remain unmolested in his own.

It is a subject on which I sometimes dwell with melancholy satisfaction ;—my mind turns back to the ancient ages of Christianity ; traces the intolerance of Paganism to the religion of Jesus Christ ; the hardships and persecutions which it then sustain-

ed; and compares these with the intolerance, the hardships, and persecutions, which Catholicity has experienced from Protestants since the æra of the reformation; and which she in some degree experiences still. There are circumstances very strikingly similar in the conduct of its ancient persecutors, and in that of its more modern adversaries.——It is well known that the pagan nations, particularly the most enlightened and refined, very liberally tolerated the propagation of every error; and gave the most boundless liberty to every sect and species of superstition. In general they adopted the deities, however monstrous they might be, of every country which they subdued, and erected altars for their worship. Rome itself, the seat of wisdom, erected altars and offered adoration, not only to the gods of Italy, but to all the impure divinities of Greece; to the foolish idols of Egypt; and to the dæmons of every adopted and subjugated state. Their Pantheon is still a standing monument of their liberality and superstition; of their toleration and bigotry.——However, amid all this enlarged expansion of liberality and toleration, Christianity was proscribed; the mild, the beneficent, the divine, and only true religion, was alone proscribed, persecuted, and vilified. The most illiberal edicts prohibited its profession; the most sanguinary laws forbad its exercise; and restrictions, which were often injurious to the public welfare, withheld its members from every office, trust, dignity, and employment.—If the cause of this conduct were asked, the answer would be easy. It is because error being indulged to error, and superstition allied to superstition, they both naturally conspire against truth and piety, because truth and piety condemn their folly

and extravagance.—Need I here describe the conduct of the reformers until the late dawn of liberality, or depict what Catholicity had long to sustain from the inhuman policy of Protestant fanaticism? It is only taking a copy from the original which I have just presented. But, without describing the conduct of Protestants in different states, or depicting what Catholicity has every where suffered from them, I will content myself with just sketching what prejudice itself will not read with regret in the annals of our own country. In this country,—the seat of liberality and refinement; the school of science, and the noblest temple in which liberty is worshipped; we find both the civil and religious establishment admitting as the fundamental article of the public creed, the boundless tenet, "that faith must repose upon the reason and conviction of each individual:" we hear the ministers from the pulpit, and the most able writers in their works inculcate, that liberty of thought and freedom of judgment are the unalienable prerogatives of our nature, and the noblest privileges of the gospel. Very consistently with these doctrines, we behold tolerated in this country every form of error which folly or fancy may please to venerate. We hear the Anabaptist divulging his visionary dreams: the Quaker groaning forth at ease the labourings of his silly spirit: the Methodist, with hypocritical cant, trafficking with the unreasoning simplicity of ignorance: the Socinian, without apprehension, denying the divinity of Jesus Christ: the Deist insulting the revelation: and even the atheist with unblushing effrontery, publicly calling in question the existence of the God who made him. —In short, we discover that belief in this country

is free as fashion; and that every raving enthusiast, or dogmatizing sceptic may, without molestation, publish error, or heresy, or nonsense, or impiety.—— Amid all this scene of toleration and latitude of principle, must it not then appear astonishing to find *one religion* excepted: to find *one religion*, and *that* the very reverse of those which I have just enumerated,—wise, liberal, and enlightened;—the religion of the best and wisest in every civilized nation; to find *it alone* proscribed, persecuted, and insulted?—Yet such *was* the case. The religion of Roman Catholics, amid all this liberty, was *alone* forbidden; amid this masquerade of folly and impiety, *it alone* was proscribed. To profess it was high treason; and countless almost is the number of its pastors, who, for preaching piety and the love of God, were hanged, quartered, and burnt, or else persecuted, exiled, or imprisoned. The same spirit which pursued christianity of old, frowned horribly upon the Catholics of this country.

Thank God! those frightful times have passed away. Philosophy has scared that species of persecution which delights in scenes of blood; it has expelled it from the haunts of bigotry itself. There are few so rigidly tenacious of their ancient prejudices as not now to own that it is unwise to attempt to enlighten faith by the gleams of fires; or to inspire piety by the sublime eloquence of the gallows. It is now pretty generally allowed that persecution is calculated to make only hypocrites or martyrs; to damn the pusillanimous, and to saint the hero. Bigotry has, therefore, now sheathed the murdering steel; and the Catholic, compared with his good fore-

fathers, wantons in luxurious comfort: he sits down *secure under his own vine or fig-tree;* and his native country is a land of Canaan to him.

O Melibœe, Deus nobis hæc otia fecit!
illius aram,
Sæpe tener, nostris ab ovilibus, imbuet agnus.

However, although much has been done to improve the situation of Roman Catholics, and they feel much for what has been done; still, it is true, that much yet remains undone. It is true that the Roman Catholic and his religion are still set round with tests, penalties, and proscriptions; are still stinted and restricted; still insulted, calumniated, and reviled. While favours, and honours, and offices, are open to every form of error; open to the deist or the atheist, provided their piety will abjure the truth of Popery;—to the Catholic, because his conscience will not basely abjure what his reason reveres, they are shut for ever. He alone is distrusted and disgraced. Be his loyalty, his wisdom, or his virtue, what they may in the eyes of the nation, his religion is a higher crime, a juster cause of seclusion from honours, offices, or favours, than either Protestant disloyalty, Protestant ignorance, or Protestant infamy.

Thus men ungodded may to places rise,
And sects may be preferr'd, without disguise.
No danger to the church or state from these;
The Papist only has his writ of ease.
No gainful office gives him the pretence
To grind the subject, or defraud the prince.
Wrong conscience, or no conscience, may deserve
To thrive; but *ours alone* is privileg'd to starve.
DRYDEN.

Indeed, there must be a progress in every thing.

It is in the nature of all habits, changes, and improvements. The nation has made immense strides to moderation in our regard. And there is reason to hope, that having discovered the impolicy and inhumanity of persecuting us, it will ere long discover the wisdom of being liberal to us:—will ere long discover, that the best source of loyalty is generosity; the best source of proselytism, (if it should wish to make us proselytes,) reason and liberality.—Meanwhile, however, we continue to labour under many unmerited restrictions; and there lurks still brooding in the public mind, a portion of that spirit of intolerance and rancor to which all our past persecutions owed their origin.

Neither, (I mention this circumstance because it is singular,) is the spirit of intolerance to Popery confined to the members of the legal establishment, to whom alone it should seem intolerance to us would be useful. It extends to every class of sectarism in this nation: it is even in general greater in these than in the former; for it is observable, that every farther remove from Popery, is a farther remove from affection to it.—I will not pretend to explain the cause of the phenomenon; yet certain it is, that while the Protestant and Presbyterian; the Methodist and Quaker; the Anabaptist and Independent, are divided from each other in their tenets more widely, in some cases, than they are from the Church of Rome; in their common hatred of Popery they are united; they forget their own disunion; or rather, such is the effect of religious animosity and prejudice against us, they convert their very disunion into a band of mutual union and attachment.

The hatred of popery is the rallying point of modern heresy. Were we to look only for precedents of this conduct, we might find them numerous enough in the annals of ages past. It was so, Tertullian mentions, among the heretics of his time. "*Schisma est unitas ipsis**." *Division is the source of union among heretics.* If we seek for the cause, although I do not pretend to point it out exactly, I would guess that it is similar to that which prompted Paganism to hate christianity. The Catholic condemns heresy; therefore heresy indignant condemns and abhors the Catholic.

I am aware that it may possibly be observed, that what I have said respecting toleration, might appear to come mighty well from an advocate for toleration. But that a Papist should plead for liberty of faith, who does not grant it; or censure intolerance, while he professes intolerance as a dogma of his creed!—surely, this is neither wise nor modest. "Merely because he is intolerant he deserves to be treated intolerantly."

In reply to these observations I remark, that the Protestant who makes them, is neither acquainted with the principles of Papists, nor with his own; neither with the nature of popish intolerance, nor with the fundamental maxim of the protestant reformation.—As for Popish intolerance—it is true that the Papist is intolerant. But it is also true, that his intolerance is neither an enemy to charity nor a violation of benevolence: it is neither persecution, nor harshness, nor injustice. The Catholic believes, as I have often remarked before, that his religion is divine and indivisi-

* Apologet.

ble; consequently, whatever is in contradiction to it, he believes is impious, erroneous, or false, and, therefore, justly deserving condemnation.—He believes that revelation is the essential rule of his religious faith, proposed to him by the Eternal Wisdom, and imposed upon him by the divine authority; therefore, he regards all erroneous explanations of it as fictions, at best, which insult the Legislator who dictated it; and considers all wilful deviations from it as acts of disobedience to the power which laid it on mankind. Catholic intolerance, in this point of view, is nothing but the intolerance of truth to error; the irreconciliation of the Divine Wisdom with human folly; the incompatibility of holiness with impiety. Indeed, if it be impossible to reconcile error with truth, or if the intolerance of error be a necessary property of truth, why is it not too the property of the true religion? In effect, whoever conceives that the true religion may be reconciled with error, absurdly conceives that truth can cease to be divine; he divides Christ; and makes christianity a hideous compound of light and darkness; of truths and fables; of wisdom and folly.

I have compared these principles with those which were taught by the first preachers of the christian institute. I have also compared the conduct of the Catholic Church with the conduct of these men, whose actions form an unexceptionable rule for imitation. I found that the principles of both are alike: and I discovered that the hated intolerance of the Catholic Church, as it has been exercised of late, is but a mild and softened repetition of the intolerance which was exerted by the apostles. I refer the reader to their writings. In his epistle to the Gala-

tians, St. Paul says to them, "*If any announce to you any thing contrary to what I have preached, let him be accursed**." And he adds the reason; "*Because what I have preached to you I did not receive or learn from man, but from the revelation of Jesus Christ* †." The apostle considered the religion of Jesus Christ as divine; and, therefore, all deviation from it he regarded and treated as an act of disobedience to the authority which had dictated it. These principles were common to all the apostles; and, actuated by them, we find these mild disciples of the most beneficent Master exercising power, inflicting punishments, and issuing censures, with a degree of severity and vigour with which modern intolerance is unacquainted. Saint Paul *delivered up Hymenæus and Alexander to Satan, because they had fallen into error* ‡. Saint John forbids the Christians *to receive the heretic into their houses, or even to salute him.* "*If any man come unto you, and bring not this doctrine with him, receive him not into your houses; do not even salute him* §." There is, then, an intolerance which is neither a spirit of persecution nor harshness: an intolerance which may reside in the bosom of mildness and liberality; which is the result of charity itself. For not even the refinement of liberality, if it still venerate the sacred text, will deny that the apostles acted under the finest impulses of charity; and that their conduct, as well as their principles, was the effect of inspiration.

Behold precisely the nature of the only intolerance which the Catholic professes, as a dogma or ap-

* Gal. i. 9. † Gal. i, 12. ‡ 1 Tim. i. § 2 John i.

pendage to his faith. His principles are those of the apostles; and his conduct, when he follows his principles, is a gentle repetition of what they sanctioned by their example. Catholic intolerance, in speculation, is a steadiness of belief, and a refusal to compound with error. In practice, it is the care with which the shepherd attends his flock; and the vigilance by which he withholds contagion from it. For if truth be a deposit that is worth preserving, reason must approve the industry that places barriers around it: if error be a guilty thing, piety must applaud the means that preserve the public from it. How different are these maxims from those of persecution and injustice!

But suppose now the case, that the church is actually called upon to restrain the artifices of error, and to awe its contagion from her children.—I do not say that the method which, on such occasions, she employs, may not excite the censure of the guilty; but they are such as wisdom will allow the guilty themselves make necessary.—On such occasions, the first method which the church employs to stay the growing evil, are prayers, persuasions, and entreaties; the arts of a fond parent, endeavouring to prevent the misfortunes of her children.—If her prayers, persuasions, and entreaties, prove ineffectual, and error still boldly persist to diffuse its poison, she raises the voice of her authority, and commands the daring innovator to desist:—she threatens, and holds forth the terrible consequence of his refusal.—Then, indeed, but then only, when both her benevolence and authority have been contemned; when every other argument has proved vain; and the security of the

flock demands the awful expedient, she orders him to quit her fold; and reluctantly pronounces the anathema which shuts him out.—This is the utmost extent of Catholic intolerance; this the nature of the conduct which the church observed in regard of Luther, and of almost every other heretic. Whoever believes that any other kind of intolerance is necessary, or approves any other mode of conduct, believes and approves what the Catholic religion neither teaches nor recommends.

The principles upon which the church always acts, when she punishes the corrupters of her doctrines, or secludes them from her pale, are similar to those upon which states and civil governments chastise the wicked, or banish from their society the disturbers of public harmony. The principles, indeed, in the case of the church, should appear more powerful than in that of civil governments; because the interests of our future state, which are intimately blended with the truths of revelation, are of higher consequence than those of this life. And yet, in any well regulated state or under any established government, let sedition attempt to court allegiance from its duty; let it endeavour to sow in the public mind the seeds of anarchy; let it labour to undermine the constitution; who is there that in such cases would say that the government would act unwisely, if, to stop the spreading evil, it should punish the seditious, or expel the rebellious from its bosom? Moderation itself would approve such conduct. If there be aught severe annexed to it, the cause of the severity is in him who wilfully provokes it: it is in the perversity of the men who first proclaim hostilities, and in the

obstinacy with which they boldly persist in them. Severity, in these circumstances, is in reality the love of peace, and zeal for the public happiness.—However, not the greatest severity of the church is similar to that of civil governments. There is nothing cruel in her censures; nothing bloody in her punishments. She does not wield the sword of human justice; nor permit her ministers to stain their hands in the blood of the most impious heretic that ever vilified the truth. Whenever the urgency of general danger compels her to launch the awful thunders of her authority, she holds them long suspended before she does it: before she does it, she entreats the offender to spare her the affliction of being severe; and when the thunders are just poised to be hurled, she points out to him the method to avoid them: when fallen, she recalls them the moment that he revokes his errors.—But after all, give them their full effect; what is that effect in this life, which even delicacy can call cruel? They neither affect life, liberty, nor property. The power of the church is spiritual; and the punishments which she employs are like her authority, spiritual only. They consist in depriving the guilty of those graces and privileges of which she is the depository; or in prohibiting the exercise of those functions which are subject to her jurisdiction.

I own that it is unhappily too true that a multitude of the professors of the religion of Roman Catholics, have not always adhered to these gentle maxims: I own that they have deviated, very greatly from them. But experience knows, and moderation will allow it; the professors of the true religion, under the sacred

mantle of religion, and in the insulted name of religion, have committed crimes and perpetrated horrors which religion execrated. Religion has frequently been made the tool of interest; the instrument of ambition; and the plaything of every passion. The ministers of religion have often had the weaknesses, or possessed the same passions as other men: and often like other men have yielded to them; or else, mistaking the suggestions of their weakness or the dictates of their passions for the language of reason and piety, have rushed into excesses, over which reason and true piety have wept.—But then, whenever they acted thus; whenever, although impelled by upright motives, they acted wrong; when they persecuted or applauded persecution, they ceased to act as the representatives of the Catholic religion. They acted as unauthorized individuals. Neither the Catholic religion is answerable for their excesses; nor is the Catholic amenable to justice for their crimes. No, whenever Pope or Primate transgressed the boundaries of moderation, they did it not under the guidance of any Catholic principle, but under the direction of their own passions, or of the passions of other men. When even they defended religion, as they conceived, at the expense of humanity, they violated the religion which they professed to defend: they acted as religious tyrants, whom Catholicity condemns; or as ignorant fanatics, whom it equally abhors.—At all events, themselves alone are answerable for their conduct.

But if I were now to ask upon what principle the Protestant is intolerant, or by what rule he can attempt to restrict the religion of Roman Catholics;

I see nothing that his reason could reply to satisfy the question. Toleration is the very essence of Protestantism: all are allowed to examine, to discuss, to judge; and of course, else the examination and discussion would be fruitless, to decide for themselves. Therefore, to refuse the Catholic this privilege, or rather this right, if it be not a breach of Protestant orthodoxy, it is at least the combat of Protestant prejudice against Protestant principle. I think it is unorthodox. But be that as it may; it is a circumstance which is not novel in the rolls of history, or in the annals of human passions: we often find the spirit of an institution and the spirit of its partisans, extremely different things. Inconsistency is a common appendage to humanity: and, perhaps, it is the best apology which the Protestant could offer for his intolerance.—Certain this is, that nothing can differ more widely from each other, than the maxims of Protestantism and the conduct of Protestants. This made Rousseau remark, that Protestantism is the most inconsequent of all the sects of Christianity. "De toutes les sectes du Christianisme, la Lutherienne me paroît la plus inconsequente; elle réunie contre elle seule, toutes les objections, qu'elles se font l'une a l'autre. Elle est, en particulier, intolerante comme l'Eglise Romaine. Mais le grand argument de celle-ci lui manque. Elle est intolerante, sans scavoir pourquoi *."

In order to obviate or silence the imputation of contradiction; or to justify the persecutions, which Protestantism has enforced, and the intolerance which it still retains against the professors of the Catholic

* Letters de la Mont.

Religion; the wisest or only arguments would be, that the security of the state, the nature of our principles, or the tenour of our conduct, rendered these contradictions necessary.——I will answer each of these arguments separately, although a single reflection might suffice to show their fallacy. We have been persecuted, during some of the most flourishing epochs of our history; when the state, in the midst of tranquillity, had neither foreign nor domestic enemy to dread. Multitudes have been put to death, who were neither accused nor suspected of disloyalty nor disaffection; whose sole crime was their religion; whose sole impeachment was their belief. Are we not still, indeed, restricted, although the state entertains no apprehension of insecurity from us: although it is satisfied, both of the honesty of our principles and the loyalty of our conduct? Let moderation look into the history of this country; it will discover that the hatred of Popery and Papists have been, since the æra of the reformation, one of the most prominent features in the character of its inhabitants; it will find that it was the zeal and bigotry of the Protestant pastors that most fervently invoked persecution on us; that it was Protestant intolerance, not Protestant policy; Protestant illiberality, not Protestant wisdom, that condemned our holy predecessors to the gallows.

But I come to our *principles;* that is, to those principles which alone have any relation to the state. They are these. We revere our Sovereign, be his religion what it may, as the vicegerent of the King of Heaven; and independent of the nature of all the various systems of *right*, we consider the obligation of

submission and obedience to him, as a strict and formal injunction of our religion. With St. Paul we profess, that "*He who resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God**." Accordingly, *we submit, not through fear of punishment*, but as the same apostle advises, *from a principle of conscience*. We admit and make the plainest distinctions between the privileges of the church and the prerogatives of the state; between the power of the Pontiff and the authority of the Monarch. We own both to be of a nature entirely distinct and independent on each other; so that neither all the privileges of the church, nor all the power of the Pontiff, can in any case detach us from the obligations which we owe to the state; nor absolve us from the allegiance which is due to our lawful Sovereign. We admit no temporal jurisdiction in our Popes, beyond the limits of their own territories; and we should regard their most slender, if illegal interference, in the civil rights and regulations of states, sovereigns, and subjects, as a deviation from the nature of their own power, and a departure from the maxims of our religion. *Such are the principles of Roman Catholics.* We say anathema to him who rejects them.

Although these be the tenets of the religion of Roman Catholics, sanctioned by public authority and stamped with public authenticity; consequently, sufficient to silence the imputations of malevolence, or to satisfy states that their security is not endangered by our most perfect emancipation; still in this country to our profession of these tenets, *we have added the solemn testimony of an oath, that we sincerely, and*

* Rom. xiii.

in our hearts, believe them. The chain, thus formed by our tenets, and linked to so sacred an engagement, ought surely to appear sufficiently strong, I do not say to hold us down to our duty, but to calm the apprehensions of the most suspicious. However, yet farther—we have not only most unequivocally professed and awfully pledged our allegiance to our sovereign, we have with equal solemnity testified our abhorrence *of every horrid doctrine* which ignorance and malice had, with mischievous industry, so long imputed to us. We have *sworn too* that should the protection of our monarch or the defence of our country demand our efforts, we will stand forward to assist and shield them, at the expense of our property, and with the sacrifice of our lives. Catholic allegiance is, therefore, more forcibly expressed, and more powerfully secured, than that of any other denomination of Christians or class of British subjects. We can say to our countrymen what Tertullian once said to the Pagans: "*Our Sovereign is more ours than yours.*" Noster magis Cæsar, quam vester.

I neither impeach the loyalty of any portion of his majesty's subjects, nor will I make a comparison of their principles with ours; but whoever is conversant in the writings of a multitude of political and moral writers in this country, will own that there is a latitude in their opinions respecting the nature of civil governments, and the obligations of the subject, widely different from those which the Roman Catholic professes. While the above writers consider governments as mere human institutions, we respect them as the ordinances of God: while they regard the sovereign as the mere agent and representative

of the people, we revere him as the instrument and the image of the Lord of heaven: while they inculcate obedience as a matter of expedience, we enforce it as a religious obligation. In short, as far as principles are the guardians of a throne, the principles of Roman Catholics are a better guarantee to it, than those of any of the countless sects of the reformation. And, bound as we are by our principles, with the additional chain of our oath, I confidently repeat it: "*Our sovereign is more our sovereign than the sovereign of any other class of British subjects.*" Noster magis Cæsar, quam vester.

As for the *conduct* of Roman Catholics; it was, where the right of succession was evident, always strictly in unison with their principles. But before I present any proofs of this, let me ask, whether, if they had not *always* been true to their principles of allegiance, common moderation would wonder at it? The Roman Catholics of this nation, during the long course of above two hundred years, were persecuted, restricted, insulted, debased, and injured. What wonder, therefore, if they had laboured to throw off a yoke which galled them?

During this horrid interval, the Catholic, nicknamed the Papist, was the victim of every artful minister's designs; the butt of every enthusiast's fanaticism. If avarice sought for wealth, the Papist was the object devoted to satisfy its avidity:—if cruelty thirsted for blood, the Papist was the sacrifice that was immolated to glut its cravings:—if ambition aspired to popularity, to degrade the Papist was the surest method of attaining it:—if bigotry aimed at preferment, or ignorance at the reputation of sancti-

ty, to insult the Papist was the medium of success:—if even error or infidelity wished for the fame of orthodoxy, to misrepresent the Papist was the unfailing criterion that evinced it. During the whole series of this long interval, the only comforts which the Papist was permitted to enjoy, were the occasional pauses of persecution:—temporary truces which were necessary, that cruelty might recover breath. But never had he one motive, save that of his duty, to animate loyalty; never one inducement, save that of obedience to his religion, to prompt him to love his country. What room is there then for surprise, if thus circumstanced, he had not proved loyal? Both the language of duty and the voice of religion often sound feeble and languid, where nature frets under the scourge of injustice; or when the louder calls of passion stimulate revenge. Only treat a man as an enemy, it is the natural mode of making him an enemy: treat him as disloyal, it is the way to render him disloyal. But when to this mode of treatment there is added every circumstance that can provoke, injure, and degrade, disloyalty under such aggravations, becomes as much the dictate of nature, and of the temper of the human constitution, as loyalty, under the opposite treatment of kindness and benevolence, becomes the result of gratitude and interest. Philosophy, if philosophy only were the judge, would attribute the mischief which arose from the conduct of the disloyal, *thus rendered disloyal*, not to the men themselves, but to the injustice or bigotry which goaded them into it. And thus the blame of Catholic disloyalty would be found to repose on Protestant injustice.

But it was not thus. The Catholic, under all the tempting circumstances which I have enumerated, was not disloyal to any one of his persecuting sovereigns, whose claim to the crown of these kingdoms was manifest and undisputed. He obeyed with equal fidelity, and fought with equal loyalty, for the prince who persecuted him, as he had ever done for the monarchs of his own religion. I will not take an extensive review of the past conduct of Roman Catholics. The narrowness of my plan renders that impracticable. I will only call back to recollection a few of the many epochs that were trying to their principles and loyalty. The first shall be the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The intolerance of Elizabeth, and the cruelty of her ministers to the professors of our religion, stand recorded in our annals in characters of blood. The severity of their persecution; the penalties, proscriptions, confiscations, mulcts, imprisonments, banishments, racks, tortures, and executions, which stained that period, put it almost on a level with the sanguinary reigns of the early persecutors of Christianity.—Still, under the pressure of all these hardships, the Catholics were loyal; and Elizabeth herself had the generosity to acknowledge it. They were loyal, spite of their own interests: spite of the ease with which they might once have dethroned her: spite of the excommunication which the Pope had issued out against her; and the release which he had affected to grant them from obedience to her authority. Never did the prospects which sometimes presented themselves of improving their situation, tempt them from their duty; not even the flattering prospect of re-establishing their beloved religion,

when the invincible armament of Philip seemed to bring triumph to their cause. They exhibited proofs of fidelity, of which history has few examples. They defended a sovereign who persecuted them, against men whose object was to relieve them : fought for a princess who repaid their loyalty with disgrace ; against invaders who would have rewarded their disloyalty with honours. They exhibited the phenomenon of the slave combating for his chains ; the captive for his prison ; the condemned for his gibbet.—But Elizabeth was their lawful sovereign :—that was enough.

The next epoch to which I refer, is that of the great rebellion ; an epoch, perhaps, the most awful in the annals of this nation.—It is well known that Charles, like his Protestant predecessors, had persecuted the Catholics ; and though naturally mild and humane, yet teazed by the importunities of his bigoted subjects, had enforced with great severity all the sanguinary laws which former reigns had enacted against them. Some were put to death ; many were imprisoned and exiled ;—all were oppressed. However, this mattered little ; unjust as Charles was to them, still he was their sovereign ; and urged by this motive alone, forgetful of their own sufferings and of his ingratitude, they crowded, with more than loyal impatience, round his standard ; they lavished their riches in his cause ; and multitudes of them fell nobly in his defence. Their conduct during this great event, stands a striking monument of rare fidelity : it has extorted the reluctant tribute of praise even from the partiality of our enemies.

The devotion of Roman Catholics to the cause of Charles the Second, who, till the close of his life, was

both a Protestant and a persecutor, was similar to that with which they had fought for his royal father. The zeal with which they hastened to his support; the numbers who fell in the battle of Worcester; the pious care with which they assisted him in his dangers; and kept secret, in spite of the temptation of great rewards, the places of his concealment; these are examples which only the most heroic loyalty is capable of exhibiting.—I might detail many instances of Catholic fidelity on other occasions and at other periods; but whoever calls it in question, until the æra of the revolution, must be grossly ignorant of the history of his own country.

At the æra, then, of the revolution, it is true that the great body of Roman Catholics did not applaud the sudden change: nor did their steadier principles prompt them to transfer their attachments from a line of monarchs, whom they had long revered, to a succession which seemed to intrude itself upon them. It is true, at that period, and for some years after, their ill-fated and ill-timed loyalty remained unhappily devoted to a cause which Providence did not protect.—I will neither defend nor excuse their obstinacy: but it were easy, I think, to offer something by way of an apology. There is much in their conduct which moderation will forgive: and something even which wisdom will admire.

The æra when William's good fortune placed him on the throne of James, should be considered in the same point of view with every other revolution; as an epoch of violence, contest, perplexity, and doubt; as a storm, which, like those of nature, could neither be unattended by some unhappy accidents, nor pos-

sibly subside at once—Be the cause what it may which places a new sovereign upon an ancient and hereditary throne, it cannot be supposed, so various are the shades in the characters of men, so various their interests, their principles, and inclinations, that all will instantly exult in the novelty; that all will own its justice; discover its propriety; or be gratified with the manners of the man who comes to rule them.—The Catholics had several peculiar motives to regret the abdication of James. Persecution, during his short reign, had paused: they had begun to taste, like other subjects, the comforts of liberty; they felt the happiness of practising unmolested the duties of religion; and they beheld before them the prospect of honours and preferment. These circumstances very naturally tended to increase their attachment:—However, it was not upon these circumstances that the loyalty of Roman Catholics to James and his descendants was bottomed. The loyalty of Roman Catholics to the unfortunate house of Stuart had for its real foundation those political principles which all the wisdom and all the learning of the nation had for ages before, held sacred and inviolable. It is well known, that the great and fundamental principles which had always regulated the claims of our princes to the throne of this kingdom, were these; "*that the succession is hereditary; and that the crown shall always devolve to whoever is heir to it in the direct and lineal order of descent.*" These maxims were sanctioned by whatever is most expressive in common Law; best legalized by constitutional custom; or binding by the rule of universal precedent. They had subsisted as the basis of our constitution, almost

nine hundred years from the union of the Heptarchy; and above six hundred from the æra of the conquest. —Now it is a circumstance as undeniable as the above maxims, that the right of James to the crown was strictly hereditary, and attended by every title which law, custom, or precedent required: it was directly lineal; therefore directly constitutional. The partisans of William pretended not to contest it.—— The revolution consequently, which deprived him of it, and established William in his stead, as it was a deviation from the order of inheritance, was a deviation from the order of the constitution; as it was a deviation from the direct line of our ancient monarchs, it was a direct deviation from the laws, customs, and precedents, which habit had instructed men to respect. At this period neither the voice of the laws, nor the wisdom of the politician, nor the learning of the universities, had suggested the distinction between such deviation from the constitution and the breach of the constitution. It was, in effect, the misfortune of the Roman Catholics to conceive it a breach of the constitution. They conceived that as James was the only lineal heir, he was the only constitutional heir; and that having been acknowledged as their lawful monarch, he could not cease, unless by voluntary resignation, to continue their lawful monarch. All this, under existing circumstances and the prevailing notions of *right*, was a consequence too easily deducible, and unfortunately too easily deduced. The abdication by which James forfeited his title, was considered as a mere temporary retreat, the effect of violence, and the dictate of necessity. Neither, indeed, were the Catholics singular in these ideas:

The same ideas divided half the subjects of the kingdom: they produced a schism in the protestant church; at the head of which were not only many of the most eminent members of our universities, but nine of the most learned and virtuous on the bench of bishops: the multitude of Protestant non-jurors was countless: and in Scotland hardly was there a voice, that was heard to declare for the claims of William. Thus situated, as Catholics were at this perplexing period; surrounded by the laws and customs which preceding ages had holden sacred; beholding Protestants refuse their allegiance to a Protestant monarch; attached by prejudice, interest, and inclination to the fugitive prince;—who can wonder that the new order of things did not find them its advocates or promoters? Judging from the *letter* of the constitution, they believed James their sovereign; and from the principles of allegiance which is due to a sovereign they thought it criminal to refuse him their assistance. Thus, their fault was in their ignorance, rather than in their will. They did not, as they should have done, distinguish between the letter of the constitution and the spirit of the constitution. While the former favoured James, the latter excluded him from the throne. But then, as I observed, this distinction too was yet a problem, which nothing in our laws, nothing in the varied scenes of our history, nothing in the boldest evagations of our politics, appeared either to establish or admit. The Catholics gave their allegiance to James for the same reason, they supposed, as they had given it to preceding princes; for the same motive which rendered them faithful even to their most sanguinary persecutors. It

was because they conceived him to be their lawful sovereign Such was their steady attachment to this principle, that had James been the Catholic invader, and William their Protestant and hereditary monarch, they would have defended the protestant and hereditary monarch against the Catholic invader. Thus had they acted on previous occasions; and thus, from the nature of their political principles, they would have acted again. They defended James not as a Catholic prince; but as an hereditary, constitutional, and, as they conceived, legal sovereign.

However, after all, whatever may have been the errors or the faults of the Roman Catholics, either at the period of the revolution or for some time subsequent to it, the Roman Catholics of the present day are not answerable for either. The errors and faults of our forefathers were their own. They did not, they could not, transfer them, like original sin, to their posterity. We acknowledge no original sin but that of Adam; and the man whose malevolence still presses their faults upon us, their descendants, commits an act of injustice which his reason and religion reprobate.—But, thank God for it! the whole problem is solved, whose obscurity was the cause of all the errors of our forefathers. The deviation from the rule of the constitution has been proved constitutional; the claim of our present monarchs has been acknowledged; and the Roman Catholics have unanimously and cheerfully transferred the devotion which marked their loyalty to the house of the Stuarts, to the illustrious house of Hanover. We have, even in order to calm the apprehensions of the timid and the prejudiced, solemnly appealed to God, to our country, and to the

world, to witness the sincerity of our acknowledgment and the steadiness of our loyalty.

For many years previous to this test of our fidelity, the nation had been convinced of the loyalty of Roman Catholics; and the wisdom and justice of multitudes had felt the propriety of rewarding it.—— *Since that period*, I do not hesitate to assert it, there has not occurred one single solitary circumstance, which I do not say was calculated to excite, or revive the suspicion of our disloyalty; there has not incurred one single solitary circumstance, that has not strikingly evinced our loyalty, patriotism, and affection.——Here, then, if faults are not immortal; the faults of our ancestors cease to be imputable to us; and loyal, faithful, and patriotic, as we are, although the liberality of the state may not deem it prudent to reward our patriotism, the liberality at least of the public should shut their ears to the insinuations which spleen and bigotry are still pleased sometimes to pour out against us.

I do not know whether it be wise to take notice of this circumstance, or not.—Notwithstanding the general conviction of our loyalty; in the very teeth of facts which render it incontrovertible; there have lately risen up a few writers, who, by hints dark as their own characters, have insinuated, or by imputations malevolent as their tempers have asserted, that "our loyalty is precarious; that our attachment is only artifice; and our allegiance policy." It is true, the government is too wise to regard the injurious impeachment; the public too liberal to believe it; and the prejudiced themselves too well informed to conceive it just. As for the Catholic, he condemns it as the impotent attempt of malice.—Malice it sure-

ly must be; for what more properly can deserve that name, than an accusation which makes us guilty, amid the clearest proofs of innocence; disloyal, in face of the demonstration of our loyalty; which provokes *real and present* punishment, for what is at most allowed to be *problematical and future* guilt? These are the arguments of persecutors: they would persecute us for ever; because by them, we shall be for ever guilty: they are the very arguments which the Pagan persecutors employed against christianity. The Christians, these men said, *hold secret and dangerous doctrines*, which render their persecution prudent and grateful to the gods.

I have stated already what are *doctrines* of Roman Catholics: they are loyal as the timidity of our government could desire them. *Secret doctrines* we have none, any more than the early Christians. I have stated also what has long been the nature of our *conduct*. The loyalty of our conduct is the result of the loyalty of our doctrines.—But again I will bring forward our conduct in opposition to these dark insinuations. Let even ill will examine it, during the late eventful revolution in France, or during the present awful and interesting contest.—Is there aught which appears to indicate that our loyalty is precarious? Is there aught which indicates that it is not equally steady with that of the most faithful Protestant subject?—View the great body of our society;—they stand forward with the same zeal as their Protestant neighbours, to awe invasion from our shores; to support every burden which the state imposes, and to encounter every difficulty. There is neither evasion observed nor murmur heard among them. Our *gentry*, with impatient patriotism, have unani-

mously tendered their services to their country.—*In the navy* we number an immense multitude of Roman Catholics; and whoever suspected that any of these skulked more ingloriously from dangers, or fought with less ardour, than the warmest advocate for Protestantism?—*In the army* our numbers are not inconsiderable; and when was it remarked that the Catholic wields his sword with less energy, or points his musket with less truth, than his Protestant fellow-soldier?—*Among the members of our clergy*, although it is perhaps there that disloyalty may principally be supposed to lurk; among them there is nothing can be traced which is not strikingly expressive of loyalty and attachment. They preach the most unequivocal principles of allegiance, submission, patriotism, and affection. In their prayers they solicit a long life and happy reign for our sovereign, and they invoke blessings upon all the royal offspring. In peace they implore prosperity; and in war they call down success to crown their country's efforts. If there be among us one whose principles are not such as I have laid them down; or whose conduct does not correspond with them, we disown him for ours; and did the state expel him from its bosom, his expulsion should have our applause and approbation.

When, therefore, notwithstanding the loyalty of our doctrines and the patriotism of our conduct, it is asserted that "our loyalty is precarious:" or to use the words of Dr. Rennell; that our "*substantial and permanent loyalty is not only precarious, but chimerical*," I pause; I am at a loss to imagine upon what cause an assertion so apparently groundless can be bottomed. My ingenuity can only imagine either that some dæmon like that of Socrates, must have dictated it; or

the strong impulse of a prophetic spirit have suggested it. If neither be the case, how much more becoming would it have been, how much more secure for the public to have satisfied them with the proofs; or laid before them the causes of our future disloyalty, than wantonly to have impeached us! If neither be the case, (as I am informed the Doctor is frequently observed in the public streets with his finger anxiously pressed upon his pulse,) I wonder whether, when he wrote or spoke the above words, he laid his finger upon the pulse, or his hand upon his heart. I recommend this observation to him, should he ever repeat them either from the pulpit or the press.

Tange, puer, venas; et pone in pectore dextram.

It is not, most certainly, by any logical deduction; not by any of the usual arts or principles of reasoning, that the bold conclusion or assertion is deduced. The logic and the principles which the great logician must have employed to make it out, were these: "The Catholic was always loyal to every prince whom he acknowledged as his lawful sovereign, although even he persecuted him; therefore, his loyalty is precarious to the prince who does not persecute him.—The Catholic is loyal at present; therefore his future loyalty is chimerical.—He was loyal when he had temptations to be disloyal and dissatisfied; therefore he will be disloyal when he has motives to be loyal and contented." I will say nothing of the absurdity of such mode of reasoning—only how differently would the wise and enlightened logician reason? From the monuments of our ancient fidelity, and the evidences of our present loyalty, he would draw conclusions

directly the reverse. He would conclude that, since we were always loyal to every prince whom we acknowledged for our sovereign, we should continue loyal to one to whom we have pledged our loyalty by an oath. Since we were loyal when ill treated, we should be loyal when well treated: since we were loyal, when loyalty, from the nature of the human passions, should appear unnatural, we should probably be loyal when not only no provocation goads us to rebellion; but when kindness, liberality, and gratitude, prompts us to love our sovereign. Thus reasoned the wisdom of our Senate, when, in the year 1780, it struck off some of the links of our fetters which the bigotry of the preceding ages had riveted upon us. Without prying into the mists and visions of futurity, their philosophy and their policy were contented with adopting, as the basis of their legislation, the common data of common sense, common wisdom, and common justice;—*our present principles, and our present conduct.* Satisfied that our principles were loyal, and that our conduct corresponded to our principles, they felt the impropriety of persecuting us; they enlarged the sphere of our activity; and read the proofs of our future loyalty, in the testimony of our present loyalty. Thus, too, did all reason, who are wise and moderate in the nation; and, convinced of our allegiance and fidelity to our reigning princes, by a general peal of approbation, they sanctioned the act which gave us back the common rights of fellow-citizens and fellow-men.

I do not know whether the men who call in question our future loyalty, be much versed in the principles of the logic of good sense or not;—whether they

have studied the analogy of occurrences; or calculated events or probabilities in the nature of the human passions; but when they call it in question, I am sure they take no maxim of *common* logic; no principle of *usual* analogy; no precedent in the *general effects* of passion, for their *præmissæ*. For whoever will examine in the annals of states, or trace in the history of the passions, by what means loyalty has been soured to disaffection, and duty tempted into rebellion; he will find, that injustice and ill treatment were their usual sources:—that persecution, penalties, and restrictions; suspicion, frowns, and illiberality, were the common principles from which they grew. They are, indeed, (the heart of the most virtuous man will feel it,) the natural principles from which they should grow; the proper leaven by which these evils should be fermented.—When, therefore, not only the injustice of policy has ceased to persecute, and the virulence of fanaticism to do us much injury; when not only we are comparatively happy and free, but when every religious and civil cause is done away, which either suspended our attachment to the house of Hanover, or kept alive the public apprehension; when the ancient sources of dissatisfaction are dried up, and it is our interest to be loyal;—in such circumstances, and at such a time, to say that "*our loyalty is chimerical*," is an assertion or prediction which not only appears improbable and unphilosophical; it appears ridiculous and absurd;—it looks like ill will, that invokes fresh misery upon; like rancour that would feed with relish on fresh victims of persecution; or like envy at least, that pines at the few comforts which we enjoy.—But may not Dr. Rennell

possibly suspect, that the government of this country may again be unjust to us; and thus the precariousness of Catholic loyalty repose upon the precariousness of its good will?—May he not suspect that it may tease us into disloyalty?—Although such suspicion is just as well founded as any other that fancy can suggest, yet it is so palpably unlikely; it is such a satire upon the justice of our government; such a libel upon its humanity and wisdom, that strange and unaccountable as the notions of Dr. Rennell may be, I do not suppose that it is the basis of his prediction; nor the foundation of his fears, *if he really have any*.

To the multiplicity of these circumstances, then, which appear to render the loyalty of the Catholic *neither precarious nor chimerical*—his past and present loyalty; his oath; his professions; his principles, &c. I will add only one other;—that to be disloyal, would be not only in us an act of extreme wickedness, but an act of extreme madness and folly.—To be disloyal, (we have the good sense and the instinct to feel it,) would be sillily to provoke the goodness and call upon us the anger of the men who rule us.—To be disloyal, would be stopping up the fountain whence all our comforts flow; and turning away the hand, while it is extended to offer favours.—To be disloyal, would be our ruin. Doctor, we are not madmen. No, we have the wisdom to understand that our security is dependent upon our loyalty; that to be loyal is our interest, our gain, our advantage: that to procure ease, favours, or honours, we must deserve them; and that we only can deserve them by our zeal, fidelity, and attachment. It is, therefore, evident, that the man who can suspect our future

loyalty, must necessarily conceive that either we or our posterity must hereafter become fools and heroes fit for Bedlam.

However, I will now make the supposition, that the loyalty of Roman Catholics *is really* "precarious and chimerical;" let me ask by what arts wisdom and true policy, would labour to secure and reclaim it? I am sure, they are not those which the petulance of Dr. Rennell would seem to recommend.—Where men are not composed of the basest ingredients of human nature, their loyalty, like their love, is under the control of kindness and moderation. The heart of an Englishman, (and the heart of the English Catholic is formed of the same stuff, cast in the same mould,) is peculiarly susceptible of the fine influences of gratitude and attachment. The loyalty therefore, of the subject depends greatly upon the conduct and the liberality of the prince, and the wisdom of his government. If the prince be beneficent, his subjects will love him: if his government be wise, moderate, and humane, the people will be dutiful, obedient, and contented. It is not natural to imagine that the throne, which is the seat of goodness and justice, should be surrounded by disaffection and disloyalty; or that the sceptre which awes injustice from the guiltless, should not be in return, protected from the insults or ill designs of the guilty. The Prince can have few enemies whose conduct present no causes of enmity: the state contain few dangerous subjects, when the equity of its administration is the source of happiness and security. "Just and moderate governments," Mr. Locke remarks, "are every where quiet, every where safe."—"*If men en-*

ter into seditious conspiracies," he had said before the above words, "*it is not religion inspires them to it in their meetings; but their sufferings, and oppressions, that make them willing to ease themselves**."

These principles are the dictate of wisdom and experience; and if, either heretofore, the Catholics were admitted not to have been loyal; or if, hereafter, they should become disaffected, it is in the violation of these principles that wisdom would seek the cause. Let the sovereign treat the Catholic with justice; and the Catholic will respect him. Let him treat him with moderation—he will revere him. Let him treat him with kindness—he will *love* him. If the sovereign make the Catholic happy, the Catholic like other men has not only the gratitude to feel for goodness; he has the instinct not to destroy the fabric of his own comforts. His very passions are interested in defending the Prince who makes him happy; because, in defending him he most effectually defends himself. Neither the voice of faction could move, nor the invitations of fanaticism, seduce such a man from his duty; because faction and fanaticism have little influence over men who are happy and contented.

I speak of effects as they are naturally connected with their causes; and as they have been found to have been realized in the series of human occurren-

* First Letter on Toleration. To the above reflections, Mr. Locke in the same letter adds the following; "I know that seditions are very frequently raised upon pretence of religion; but it is as true, *that for religion*, subjects are frequently ill treated, and live miserably."

ces.——What effect the late acts of moderation in our government have had upon the feelings and the conduct of Roman Catholics, I have mentioned already. Although loyal before; loyal always where the obligations of loyalty were not problematical; we have increased the demonstrations of our loyalty, with the increase of our sovereign's goodness. We have exulted at every occasion to show our gratitude; we have used our liberty only in protecting the power that broke our chains; and our influence, whatever it may be, we have employed only in diffusing patriotism and affection.—To the nation what has been the consequence? It has increased its resources, as it has increased its moderation: it has improved its security, as it has displayed its liberality: it has broadened the basis of its prosperity, as it has widened its confidence. Instead of considering the Catholics as its enemies, and foregoing the advantages which it might derive from their assistance, it now beholds them in the ranks of its friends, and sees them combating, with the most loyal, the invaders or adversaries of its prosperity. The case is, the Catholics, although loyal before from *duty only*, are now loyal from duty, gratitude, affection, and interest. Their sovereign is now not their sovereign only, but their protector: not their ruler only, but their friend. His throne is not the tribunal before which they were wont to tremble; but the asylum, where now they confidently run for shelter: his sceptre is not the scourge under which they once used to bleed, but the shield under which they now repose with confident security.

I would not say that the writers who labour to keep

awake the diffidence of the government in the loyalty of Roman Catholics, or to excite the distrust of Roman Catholics in the good will of government; I would not say that it is their intention either to censure the equity of our parliaments, or to do an injury to their country. I say nothing about their intentions. But whoever considers well the tendency of their writings, will allow that they imply at least a censure upon the wisdom of our Senate; and are calculated to do an injury to the country. In regard of the censure upon the Senate—suppose it true that the loyalty of Catholics is really "*precarious and chimerical*"—then it is doubtless *unwise* to remove those restraints which withhold us from doing mischief; it is *imprudent* to do away those disabilities which limit the sphere of our infectious influence: it is *an injustice* to the country to suspend that suspicious vigilance, or to lay aside those salutary punishments, by which persecution awed our disloyalty from rebellion. For my own part, although a Roman Catholic, yet if it were true that the loyalty of Roman Catholics is "*precarious and chimerical;*" as I wish well to my country, I would recommend to its wisdom to take back the rights which its justice had too rashly conferred upon us; to erect again the gibbet; and to hang the sword of persecution over our ungrateful heads. Or, if persecution to death be conceived too cruel for this enlightened age, I would advise it by new disabilities, by exiles, and imprisonments, to scare our disaffection from indulging the hope or hazarding the attempt of overthrowing its prosperity. This is wisdom, where the loyalty of a considerable portion of the community is "*precarious and chimer-*

ical."—In short, I would counsel it to adopt all those measures and precautions which are likely to produce most good;—if persecution, to persecute us; if intolerance, to restrict us:——or, let me add, *if moderation*, to become more moderate; *if liberality*, to become more generous still. I leave it to philosophy to decide, which is best calculated to create, or which has actually created, the greater advantage and security to the nation.

I said also, that the writings which impeach our loyalty are injurious to the state.—It is a principle, which policy will not contest, that it is not by raising up enemies to the state that the state is more secure; not by fomenting discontent, that loyalty is increased. Every state is insecure, in proportion principally to the number of its internal enemies; and to the aggregate of discontent that grows within its bosom. Now, what is the effect which groundless imputations and false impeachments are calculated to produce? Their natural effect is to destroy affection; and by generating ill will, to rob the state of the exertions of the men whom the false impeachments come to injure. Place the state then in the crisis of danger;—in one of those moments when the union of every heart and the energies of every hand, are wanted for its defence;—in a moment like the present.—— Why, on the supposition that the accusations of Catholic loyalty had produced the effect which it is in their nature to produce; or, which it is the apparent aim of some writers to produce, the state under the apprehension of our disloyalty ought justly to distrust us; and if prudent, to forego the hazardous trial of our exertions. Above a hundred thousand nerves

would consequently be unstrung, and the strength of a powerful body of the country paralized and lost. I do not say that the security of the state would, in such circumstances, be much endangered; but it is evident that with the accession of such a force its danger would be less. Therefore, the writings which, without evidence in their support, tend to excite suspicion in the state against the subject, or ill will in the subject against the state; as they weaken the bands by which the prosperity and safety of kingdoms are linked together, tend immediately and directly to their injury and disadvantage.

I may perhaps have appeared, in the above pages, to have considered the insinuations and impeachments of our enemies, in a more serious point of view than they in reality deserve. Since they have produced little sensation on the public mind, and none upon the minds of the liberal but that of indignation, it may be thought that they merited no other notice than that of pity or contempt. Perhaps these notions are right. But whoever reflects either upon the *nature* of the attack which is made upon our loyalty, or upon the manner and style in which it is made, will with me allow, that no mode of repelling it can appear too serious. The mere insinuation that is aimed at our loyalty, pains us in the tenderest part. It is levelled at all our comforts, as Catholics, as subjects, and as men. It is not like the rant of bigotry against our idolatry; nor like the silly abuse which the pertness, and petulance, and foppery of Doctor Rennell's rhetoric incessantly pours out against our tenets and superstition. We can smile, and often do amuse ourselves, with these compara-

tively harmless evaporations of ill will.—Every thing that is dear to us on this side of the grave, is connected with the conviction which our country entertains of our loyalty;—the liberty of practising our holy religion; the confidence of our fellow-citizens; the ease, comforts, and security of domestic life. The fine feelings of sensibility; the chaste sentiment of honour, must be lost that does not resent the attempt to cover it with ignominy. I felt for the attempt; and I felt principally because the attempt is made without cause or provocation; substantiated by no proof but the bold impeachment; evinced by no testimony but the dark forebodings of a splenetic temper.

I conclude, by observing to those who have already attempted, or who may hereafter attempt to do us an injury, that the ambition which can be thus gratified, is a mean ambition truly; that the merit which can be thus purchased, is ignoble and base indeed.

Quantula, heu! laus est, vel plurima, posse nocere!
Frigidus hoc serpens, hocque cicuta potest.

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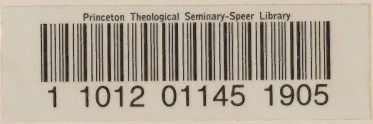
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